

THE
Poor Doubting
CHRISTIAN
Drawn to
CHRIST

Wherein the Main Lets and
Hindrances, which keep
Men from Coming to Christ,
are discovered.

With Special Helps to Recover
God's Favour.

By *THOMAS HOOKER*.

The Twelfth Edition.

LONDON, Printed by R. J.
J. Robinson, A. and J. Church,
J. Taylor, and J. Wyat.

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JOHN vi. 45.

*Every Man therefore that hath
heard and hath learned of the
Father, cometh unto me,*

THERE are divers Letts
and Impediments which
hinder poor Christians
from coming unto Christ;
all which I desire to reduce to these
following Heads.

First, Such Hindrances as really
keep Men from coming to take hold
of Christ at all, which are briefly
these.

I. Blind Carelesness, or Presump-
tuous Security, whereby Men con-
tent

Lets
which hin-
der Men
from co-
ming to
Christ.

tent themselves with their present Condition, presuming all is well with them, when there is no such matter.

2. Being convinced of this, they bethink how to save themselves by their own Strength, and thereupon set upon a Reformation of Life, thinking to make God amends by reforming some Sins which they hear themselves reprov'd of by the Ministers.

3. The Sinner being convinced of his utter inability to please God in himself, at length gets up a state higher, and sees all his Performances, and Prayers, and Duties, to be of no power in themselves, but that he must leave all, and cleave only unto Christ by Faith; and this he thinks he can do well enough, and so thrusts himself upon Christ, thinking all the Work is then done, and no more to be looked after.

4. If he sees this fails him too, then he goes yet further, and confesseth he cannot come to Christ, except Christ give him his Hand, and help him up; therefore now he will attend upon the Ordinances, and labour and bestir himself hard in the use of all good Means, concerning

thereby to hammer out at last a Faith of his own to make him happy. And here he rests, hanging as it were upon the outside of the Ark so long, till at last the Waves and Winds growing fierce and violent, he is beaten off, and so sinks for ever.

Besides these, there are other kinds of Hindrances which do not indeed deprive a Man of Title and Interest to eternal Happiness, but make the way tedious and uncomfortable, so that he cannot come to Christ so readily as he desires and longs to do; the ground whereof is this: When Men out of carnal Reason, contrive another way to come unto Christ than ever he ordained or revealed; when we set up our Standards by God's Standard; or our Threshold by his, Ezek. 43. 8. and out of our own Imagination, make another state of believing than ever Christ required or ordained; no marvel that we come short of him. For thus we put Rubs, and make Barrs in our way: We mangle our Hands, and fetter our Feet, and then say, that we cannot take, nor go: Thus it is with you poor Christians, and the Fault is your own. Now amongst many, there be three Hindrances which are chiefly to be observed,

Three observed, by which many gracious
 main Hin- Hearts are marvelously hindered
 drances from coming to, and from receiving
 which that Comfort from Christ which they
 keep Men might, and he is willing to impart
 from unto them.
 Christ.

First, The distressed Soul, being
 (haply) truly humbled, takes notice
 of the Beauty of Holiness, and the
 Image of God stamp'd upon the
 Hearts of his Children, and of all
 those precious Promises which God
 hath made to all that are his; now
 the Soul seeing these, begins thus to
 reason with it self, and saith, Surely
 if I were so holy and so gracious,
 then I might have hope to receive
 the pardon of my Sins: Or were my
 Heart so enlarged to Duties, and
 could my Heart be so carried with
 Power against my Corruptions, to
 master them, then there were some
 hope: But when I have no Power a-
 gainst Sin, nor any Heart to seek so
 importunately for a Christ, how dare
 I think that any Mercy belongs to me,
 having so many wants? Thus they
 dare not come to the Promise; and
 they will not venture upon it, because
 they have not that Enlargement of
 Duties, and that Power against Cor-
 ruption which sometimes the Saints
 of God have.

But we must know, this doth not hinder; and that we make that a Hindrance, which in truth is none. For (observe it) we must not think to bring our Enlargements and Hope to the Promise, but go to the Promise for them: Hope must be stirred, and Desire quickened, and Love and Joy kindled by the Promise. But who made this Condition of the Covenant, That a Man must have so much of Enlargement, before he can come to the Promise? Our Saviour being our Husband, requires no Portion with us, nor ever look'd after any: All that he looks for is meek Poverty and Emptiness. If thou hast nothing, yet he will have thee with thy nothing; provided that thou wilt have him. Therefore it is thus written; *The Rich he sends empty away*; but the Poor he satisfies; and the Thirsty he refreshes with good; and so, as that there is nothing required on our side but to receive him as a Husband: For, *Buy without Money* is the Text. You must not come and think to buy a Husband. The Lord looks for no Power or Sufficiency from you, of your selves; nor of your selves any Power against

A 4 to the Corrupt

Corruption, or Enlargement to Duties: If you will be content that Christ shall take all from you, and dispose of you and all; then, take Saviour, and then you have him.

Object.

But the poor Soul saith, *If I go thus hoodwink'd, how shall I know that I do not presume, and how shall I know that I have a true Title to the Promise?*

Ans.

I answer: There is no better Argument in the World to prove that thou hast an Interest in Christ, than this, which is thy taking of the Lord Christ as a Saviour wholly, and as an Husband only, *John 1. 12. As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* He doth not say, To as many as had such Enlargement to Duties, and such Power against Corruption; but if thou wilt take Christ upon those terms on which he offers himself, there is no better Argument under Heaven than that, to prove that thou hast a Title to the Promise. Indeed there is a desperate Despair that often seizeth upon the Hearts of distressed Sinners.

2.

Therefore in the second place, as the Sinner looks upon the Excellency of Christ, and of Grace, and upon his

his own Insufficiency withal, which makes him that he will not venture upon the Promise ; so he looks too altogether upon his own Sinfulness and Worthlessness, and therefore dare not venture upon it ; he views the number of his Sins so many and vile, and the continuance of them so long and durable ; and he seeth the Floods of Abominations coming in so amain upon his Soul, and Satan to boot, (who helps him forward in all this,) therefore he dares not make out unto Christ. But this is the Policy of the Devil, who (if he can) will make a Man to see Sin thorow his own Spectacles, or not to see it at all ; and then to say, There is Mercy enough in a Saviour, and therefore I may live as I list. But when the Sinner will needs see his Sin, then he will let him see nothing but Sin ; and this, to the end that he may despair for ever.

Now here the poor Sinner is at a stand, and can go no further ; for tell him of the Mercy of God, and of the plentiful Redemption in Christ, and of the Riches of the freeness of God's Grace : What (saith he) should I think that there is any Mercy for me, and that I have any Interest in Christ ?

That were strange. And thus the Soul is always poring, and always too much fastened and settled upon his Corruptions, ever stirring the Sore, without ever going to the Physician. Where note, that a Man is as well kept from looking to Christ by Despair, as by Presumption. Before he sees his Sin, he thinks his Condition is good, and that he hath a sufficiency of his own, and needs not go to Christ; and when he sees his Sin, then he beholds so much Vileness in himself, and in it, that he dares not go to Christ, lest when he comes before him, he sends him down to that ever-burning Lake of Fire and Brimstone. Herein the Devil is very subtil; but this doth not hinder our Title to Christ; neither ought it to discourage us from laying hold on Salvation.

For, first, (observe it,) For whom did Christ come into the World, and for whom did he die when he was come? Was it for the Righteous? Such needed him not: It was for the poor Sinner that judgeth himself, that condemns himself, and that he cannot save himself. Paul saith, *Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am the chief.* And Zech.

Zech. 13. 1. *There is a Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanness; that is, for all sorts of Sins, and kind of Sinners; be their Iniquities never so great, and never so vile, there is a Fountain set open for them; come who will. There was never any saved that was not a Rebel first; nor any received to Mercy, that first opposed not the Mercies of God, and his Grace in Christ. The fiery Serpents did sting the People in the Wilderness, first then they were stung, and, being stung, there was a brazen Serpent to heal them. But,*

Observe the Folly of this Plea, what Scripture ever said, that the greatness of Man's Sin could hinder the greatness of God's Mercy. No Scripture saith so; we see David prayeth to the contrary, *Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, and Pardon my Sins for they are great: Nay, God himself doth the quite contrary, Isa. 43. 24, 25. Thou hast made me serve with thy Sins, and wearied me with thine Iniquities, yet I am he that will blot out thy Transgressions for my Name's sake. When the Jews did thus with their distempered Manners, and burthened him with their sinful Courses, then the Lord for his own Names*

Names sake would not so much as remember their Iniquities against them.

Again observe, That Sins, though they be never so heinous of themselves, yet if the Soul can see them, and the Heart be burdened with them, they are so far from hindering the work of Faith, and from making thee incapable of Mercy, that they fit thee the rather to go to Christ. The truth is (which I pray you take notice of,) it is not properly our Unworthiness, but our Pride and Haughtiness that hinders us from coming to Christ; for we would have something from our selves, and not all from him. But to the distressed Soul, that sees the Vileness of his Sins; I say, suppose thy Sins were fewer; yet upon such a Suppose, thou wouldst not go to Christ, as perswaded of the Freeness of his Grace; but because thy Sins are not many, and upon conceit that thou hast a Worthiness in thy self, and wouldst bring something to Christ, and not receive all from him; therefore thou keepest back. And is it not plain (then) that it is thy Pride, and thy Self-conceitedness that hinders thee? Thou must have thus much

much Grace and Holiness; and Christ must not justify the ungodly, but the godly Man. But I tell thee, that, upon such terms, he will never justify thee, or any Man while the World stands.

But the Soul replies again; *My Object. Sins are worse than so, not only because they are many, but because of the Mercy and Salvation that I have rejected, and which hath been offered me from Day to Day.*

But I answer: This cannot hurt *Ans.* thee, provided, that thou canst see those Evils of thine: For then, though thou hast cast away the Kindness of the Lord, yet the Lord will not cast thee away, if thou wilt come and seek him earnestly again and again; *For the Iniquity of his Covetousness I was wroth (saith God) Isa. 57. 17. and I smote him; I hid myself, and he 18. went on forwardly in the way of his own Heart.* If this could have hindered, Judah should never have received Mercy: But the Text saith, I have seen his ways, and will heal him; *Thou hast play'd the Harlot with Jer. 3. 1. many Lovers, yet turn again to me, saith the Lord.* So then, there is no time past, if a Man have but a Heart to return. There is no Limitation of the

the Riches of God's Free Grace, except the Sin against the Holy Ghost; therefore saith Christ, *Rev. 3. 20.* *I stand at the Door and knock:* Though he cry till he be hoarse, and stand till he be weary, yet he stands still: If any adulterous or deceitful Wretch open, the Lord will come in, and bring store of Comfort to him, and sup with him.

Object.

Oh, all that is true, saith the poor Soul, had I but a Heart to mourn for my Baseness. See my Sins I do, but this in my Misery, I cannot be burdened with them; I have a Heart that cannot break and mourn for dishonouring of God, and offending him so many ways. But I say,

Ans.

This hurts not neither; provided that thy Heart be weary of it self, be-

Mich. 7. 8.

cause it cannot be weary of Sin. *The Lord sheweth Mercy, because he will shew Mercy:* It is not because thou canst please him, but because Mercy pleaseth him. When did the Lord shew Mercy to *Paul*? I say, when? But even when *Paul* did express most Malice against him? *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* He persecutes Christ, and yet Christ pities him, and shews him Mercy: And so the churchly *Jaylor*, when he was most oppo-

Act 16.

site

sitate against the means of Grace, the Lord even then shewed most Compassion upon him. He that (before) resisted the means of Grace, was now brought home by those means that before he resisted.

But wo to me (saith the poor *Object*. Soul) you are now come to the quick: This very Word is like a Millstone about my Neck, and I in the Sea, ready to be sunk forever. This is the depth of that Baseness that lies on me, even this, That all the means can do no better upon me. Why? What though *Paul* and the Jaylor were bad enough, so bad as you say? Yet they were made better by the Means: But this is my hopeless Condition, That the Means of Grace prevails nothing on me. Oh, is there such a Heart in Hell as I have? For how bad must it needs be, when all the means in the World can do it no more good! And now, methinks I feel my Heart more hard and inexorable under all God's Ordinances, than when at first I believed. My Condition therefore is (most certainly) hopeless, seeing the means that should soften me, do but harden me, and make me worse.

This

Ans.

This is the last Plea whereby the Devil keeps in, and possesseth the Heart of a poor heartless Sinner. But let me answer thee, and for answer I say: This hurts not neither: For here at least thou may'st have hope of mercy? And here observe these three things by way of Answer; and know that,

I.

First, The Word and Means of Grace do work good, if they make thee more sensible of thy Hardness and Deadness; though haply they work not that good, and after that manner that thou desirest; yet if they make thee to see thy Baseness, thy Hardness of Heart, and Dulness of Spirit, in regard of that Body of Death which hangs upon thee, then the Word and they work in the best manner; because it is after God's manner, howsoever not after thine. That Physick works most kindly, that makes the Party sick before it works; so it is with the Word: Before, thou hadst a proud Heart, and didst therefore lift up thy self in thine own Abilities, and didst trust in thine own Strength, and thou thought'st that thy Care, and the Improvement of the Means, would work Wonders: But now the Word works

works sweetly, when it makes thee apprehensive that a wounded Soul is the Gift of God, not of Man, nor of the Means; when it makes thee look up to God for it, and to prize it when thou hast it; and to wait upon God with thy daily Prayers, still to continue it so. To feel Deadness, is Life; and to feel Hardness, is Softness; only remember this one Caution, Except there be some Lust or Distemper that thy Heart hankers after, (for then the Word will harden thee, because thou hardnest thyself) that one I say excepted, thou art in a good way.

Secondly, (mark this, I beseech you) Thou art the cause why thy Heart is not softned, and why the Word works not upon thy Soul: The Distemper of thine own Heart, hinders the working of the Word, and Dispensation of God's Providence, and the Tenour of the Covenant of Grace. Thou thinkest to limit the holy One of *Israel*; but that may not be: For, his Covenant is a Covenant of Grace; and the Lord (who is free) will not stand bent to thy Bow, or give thee Grace when thou wilt; for, *it is not for us to know the Times and Wait for Seasons.* What if the Lord will not Mercy.
give

give thee Grace this Year, nor the next, nor all thy Life? If at the last gasp he will drop in a little of his Favour, it is more than he owes thee. Therefore hear to Day, and wait to Morrow, and continue in so doing, because thou knowest not when God may bless his own Ordinances. Complain not of Delays, but wait; for God hath waited for you long; and therefore if he make you wait for Peace of Conscience, and Assurance of his Love, he deals but equally with you, and as shall be best with you. God gives what, and when, and how he will, therefore wait for it.

3.

Rest
upon
ties.

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Du-

Thirdly, Know and consider, that thou hast rested upon thine own Duties and Endeavours, and so dost not go to God, that blest both the Means, and all the Endeavours of his this way. The fault therefore is thine own, (I say) thine own, because thou restest in thine own Performances, and in the Power of the means that thou apprehendest, and dost not go to God, that would have wrought more than all they can: For, did a Man depend upon God's Power and Mercy in his Ordinances, he should always find some proportionable Succour, as well

well when he finds no Success, as when he finds any. God sometimes gives, and sometimes delays to give: But God's Love is as constant when he gives not, as when he gives. Therefore labour to quit all carnal Confidence in holy Duties. Rest not in thine own Performances, but look beyond all Duties, to God, and desire him to give thee the Success above them.

Watch how thy Soul behaves itself after the naked discharge of a Duty: All quiet and calm, notwithstanding he lives in a daily course and practice of Sin; so that he Prays and Lies, Fasts and Cozens, and yet this makes all whole: I tell you, it is an undoubted Argument, that the Soul did place a carnal Confidence in his own Performances, and as yet never attained to a Lord Christ in the Duty: For he that seeks a Saviour in his Duties, and rests not in Self-performances, this Man brings a Saviour, a Christ into his Soul. And mark what follows; Christ brings pardoning Vertue, and purging Vertue with him, and gives him more Power against Corruptions, and more Suspicion over his own Soul than ever he had before: So that the Soul begins

to quarrel with it self, and lyes down with Shame, and says, What shall I think of my praying and hearing? Where is the Virtue and Power of it? Did ever Christ hear my Prayers, or come into my Soul by his Ordinances? Where is the purging Virtue then, to clear me of my Sins? Where is the purifying Virtue, to cleanse me of my Corruptions? This is a ground of a gracious Heart, that placeth not any Confidence in holy Duties, but only in the Lord Christ.

Do not content your selves in this, that you see a need of a Saviour, because your Minds are enlightned therein, and your Reason perswaded thereof; when in the mean time you place a kind of Confidence in the Duty performed, and Service discharged, and think thereby to bring Christ at your beck, and you in the mean while do what you please: This is a wonderful cunning craft of Satan. This I say then, A Man may see a need of a Saviour; but do not quiet thy Soul, because thou knowest it must be so, and because thou findest by Experience thou canst not help thy self; the Guilt of Sin still sticks upon thee, and therefore a Saviour now must help thee: I say, content not

not thy self with the meer notion of it, to say, I see it should be so, and it must be so, and rest thy self contented in the performances of Services, and think to bring a Saviour at thy beck, to do what thou wilt for thy Soul; this is a slight that Satan has pinn'd to thy Soul. Many think to have a Sovereign Authority over Christ, when they have performed Duties: So that he does not use the Means to be led to Christ, but he takes up his Duties to be Commanders of Christ, and that he may dispose of Christ for his own turn; so that he makes Christ an Abetter of his own Wickedness, not a Subduer of his Corruptions. This is a marvellous Deceit, when Men rest in their own Abilities, and so abuse Christ. And this will appear in these Particulars.

First, Watch how thy Heart is in the performance of Duty. Doth thy Prayer, and Hearing, and Performing of Services, make thee venturous and fool-hardy to meddle with Corruptions? Then it's a certain ground thou placest carnal Confidence in thine own Performances. As for Example: If a Professor should say, What if I do now and then sin? And what if

if I do now and then pilfer, and use false Weights and Measures? I'll but pray so much the more, and fast so much the oftner: Will not my Conscience then be satisfied? It shall be satisfied; I will command it: I will put in Bail for my Sin, and pray against it. Now I beseech you observe it; this praying and performing of Duties, is meerly to command a Saviour, to give allowance to Sin, that so he may commit it freely. As who would say, I have Authority over my Saviour, and he shall pardon my Sin, and give me allowance to commit Sin. O the wretched Villany that is in this Man's Heart! Fearful is thy Estate, whosoever thou art, that makest thy Performances an Abettor of thy Distempers: So that thou dost thy Duties not to convey Christ, that he may help thee to prevent Sin, but that Christ may take off the Venom and Indignation of Sin, that so thou may'st commit Wickedness without either Suspicion or further Distraction.

Many a Man makes his Services his Saviours. For, he makes them the bottom to bear up his Conscience; the ground whereof is this. Haply he finds and feels by woful Experience,

Experience, what the Fruits of Sin
are. He sees the Venom of his Cor-
ruptions, and the lamentable Effects
of all his sinful Practices. He thought
it before a fine thing to Swear, and
Lie, and Drink, and follow base Com-
pany ; but now they are Gravel to his
Heart, and Gall to his Soul. His Con-
science flieth in his Face, and he is
ready to sink down to Hell under the
burden of his disorder'd Life. Con-
science saith, These be thy Sins, and
these will be thy Damnation : They
have been thy Delight, but they will
love thy Shame and Confusion in
the end ; and shortly thou shalt find
the smart of them : To Hell there-
fore, be packing, and gone.

Now this Man hath no other cure
for his Conscience in such a case, but
this ; he intreats Conscience to be
quiet. He confesseth he hath lived
in base Courses, and his Condition to
be very miserable ; but now he will
reform all. He hath neglected Prayer
heretofore, but now he will pray : He
hath hated God's Servants, but now
he will love them ; his ways have
been exceeding evil, but now he will
reform them, and now he will turn
over a new leaf. This he saith, and
his (he thinks) will serve his turn.
And

And thus many poor Souls use the means as *Mediators*, and so fall short of Christ. But a gracious Heart doeth not only pray, and hear, and receive, and use all possible means to obtain Christ, but is restless and unsatisfied till he enjoy and possess Christ in the means. He rests not upon the bare performance of any Duty, neither thinks by virtue of any such his own labours to get into Christ.

I will express this Particular more fully in this manner. A rich Usurer that is sick of some Disease, will tell him such a Physician can cure him, but he stands upon state, and will not come without a great deal of Charge. Charge (saith he) I will not stand upon that; I have Money enough by me, enough to fetch him hither. Such a Man now placeth his Confidence in his Money. When the Soul sees the Guilt of Sin not removed, and that Conscience still snarling, and that (the Law condemning him) Christ is the only Saviour, and he only that can satisfy and cure all. But now, How shall Christ be procured? Why? By Prayer, and Fasting, and Performing what may command so much, and that the power and merit of the Word

done. The Voice of a Pharisee, and proper Language of a Papist. But what Promise is there for it? Within-book none. But thus Fools rest on their own Performances, and so fall short of Christ and Salvation.

But Ob (saith a poor Sinner) faine Object. would I go out of my self. I see too well now, that I have rested, and do rest upon Duties done; but I cannot deny my self as I would.

I answer, it is Satan's Subtilty Answer to keep us in our selves, by endeavouring thus to make us go out of our selves: For by our own Strengths he would have us to do it; and perswades us we may. But this is a marvellous deepness of his, wherein he shews both Malice and Cunning in the Superlative. For here he makes us believe (and we, out of Ignorance are perswaded as he would have us) that we have the Staff in our own Hands, that is, the power to get out of our selves. But is it so? Oh no, it is a Supernatural Work to be so quiet of our selves. The same hand must bring us out of our selves, that must bring us to Christ: And this is Self-denial: And Self-denial is, Self-denial, when the Soul knoweth it hath no al, what it is, and therefore is so over-powered

B

powered with the mighty Hand of God, and the Work of his Spirit, that it doth not so much as expect any Power or Ability from it self; or from the Creature, in the doing of any good: For it knows it is dead, and therefore cannot help it self, much less can the Creature do it any good. It therefore looks up to Heaven, and seeks all Sufficiency from God alone. For (observe it) while I thus think that I have Ability to go out of my self; do I not then say, that I have Principle within me to deny my self? But it is not so; rather it is quite contrary: For to deny a Man self; is to know that he hath no power in himself to do any spiritual Duty: Therefore we must look only to the Voice that calleth us, the Voice of Christ, and know that he that calls us from the ways of Darkness and out of our selves, must and will bring us out. Therefore expect only Power from Christ to pluck thee out of thy self, and to make thee a Believer; for the same Hand must do both, or it will never be.

I would not have a poor Creature think thus with himself: If Means, and these Ordinances do me no good, nor work upon

Heaven

Heart, I shall never have Comfort:
 But speak thus unto God, and say,
 In truth, Lord, I expect no Power
 from my self, nor from the means;
 but my Resolution is, to look up to
 him that hath hid his Face yet from
 his poor Servant. I will not look
 any lower, as here within my self, for
 any such Power: No, Lord, but to
 the highest in Power and Gifts. Nor
 will I look to the Minister, or to the
 Means, but I will wait upon thee, (O
 Lord) and look up to thy Power, to
 work by thine own Means. Re-
 member what *Isaiab* saith: *Who is* Isa: 50.26.
amongst you that feareth the Lord, and
obeyeth the Voice of his Servants, that
walketh in Darknesse, and hath no Light
of Comfort, let him trust in the Name
of the Lord, and stay himself upon his
God. Then when all other things in
 the World fail, let the Soul look up to
 the Lord, and get away from it self.
 For then is the fittest time of all to
 meet with God. I would have a
 Christian chuse this time above all
 times, the fittest wherein to meet his
 Saviour, and to disappoint Satan:
 For, as I said, it is the last Refuge that
 the Devil hath: And if he miss of this,
 his force is gone for ever. For o-
 therwise the Sinner, partly seeing
 the

the Beauty of Grace will not; and partly seeing the Baseness of his own Heart, will not dare to come to Christ.

Object.

But the next Complaint, in the next place, is want of Sense and Feeling, such as a Christian must have, and finds not. Therefore the distressed Soul saith, *Alas, I never knew what it was to have the assurance of God's Love; I never received any evidence of God's Favour; and can I (then) think that I have Faith? They that believe, have their Hearts, filled with Joy unspeakable and glorious; the Word saith as much. But I am a stranger to this Joy; how then can I think that I have any work of Faith wrought in me?*

Answ.

I answer; This doth not hinder, either that thou hast not Faith, or that thou may'st not come to God by believing. Only remember these three Particulars.

I.

First, Thou must think to have this Joy and Refreshing before thou goest to the Promise; thou must look for it when thou hast chewed and fed upon it: Or wouldest thou have the Lord give thee the whole Bargain at once, and before the Match is made? This Joy is a Fruit that grows

ceeds from Faith after much wrestling; and doth not presently flow from Faith, not so soon as ever a Christian begins to believe, but after a time, and then the Heart is joyous; but never filled with Joy before believing. Afterwards, and when a Man hath had the sweet Dew of the Promises dropping upon him; but many a day after, let him look for this Joy.

Secondly, Know that these joys, and this sense and feeling may be absent from Faith. For a Man may have a good Faith, and yet want the relish and sweetness which he longs after. One may want what he desires, and yet want neither Life nor Heat. A Tree may want Leaves and Fruit, and yet want neither Sap nor Moisture: And a Man's Faith may be somewhat strong, when his feeling is nothing at all. David was justified and sanctified, and yet wanted this Joy. And Job trusted upon God when he had but little feeling; as when he saith, *Thou makest me a But to shoot at; yet will I trust in thee though thou kill me.* Therefore build not your Comfort upon sense and feeling, which is to build upon the Sand; but go to the Promise, as to the Rock for it.

Quest. But how comes this Desire after Christ?

I answer: There is no more but two Affections in the Soul, God infinitely wise having so framed it; and these two are Hope and Desire. The Understanding says, such a thing is profitable and comfortable if I had it; then Hope is sent out to wait for that Goodness; and if it comes not, then Desire is sent out to meet that Goodness: Hope stands and waits for it: But Desire wanders up and down seeking and enquiring after a Lord Jesus, and goes from Coast to Coast, from East to West; O that I could, O that I might, and when shall I? And how may I come to the Speech of a Lord Christ? As it was with the Spouse in *Canticles*, when her Beloved was gone, she wandered up and down seeking him, and enquiring of the Watchmen if they did not see him whom her Soul loved; so wanders from this thing to that, from this place to that place, and never ceaseth to see if she can gain notice of Christ. It goes to Prayer, to see if that will entreat a Christ; it goes to the Word, to see if that will reveal a Christ: It goes to Conference, to see if he can hear of Christ there: Then it

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comes to the Congregation, and to the Sacrament, to see if it can hear of any News of a Lord Christ, and of Mercy.

The Soul thus continues wandring and seeking, till at last the Lord Christ comes into the Soul, when the Soul hath thus hungred and longed for him. At length the Lord Christ is pleased to shew himself in view: *Behold, the King cometh*: So the Lord says, *Behold the Lamb of God that takes away thy Sins*. O thou poor broken-hearted Sinner, here is thy Saviour; he is come down from Heaven to speak Peace to thy Soul in the pardon of thy Sins. Thou that hungrest for a Christ, here he is to fatishe thee: Thou that thirsteth after Christ, here he is to refresh thee. Thou that hast long sought him, he saith, *Here I am*, and all my Merits are thine.

Now when the Lord Jesus is pleased to present himself to the Soul, now Desire hath met with the Lord.

It is in this case with a Sinner, as it is with a Traytor who is pursued, and takes a strong Hold, and is there besieged: And now he seeth no hope of Favour, nor no hope of Escape, therefore he is content to submit, and lay his Head on the Block, that

that he may receive Punishment for his Offence: Now coming to Execution, he hears an inkling from the Messenger there is yet hope he may be pardoned. The poor Traytor in the Prison with that is stirred up to hope. Nay, then he hears by another Messenger from the King himself, if he will come to the Court, and seek unto his Majesty, and importune his Grace for Mercy and Favour, it's like he shall be pardoned. Then he makes haste, and Desire carries him to the Court to sue for Favour from the King. So that now he will be listening and enquiring of every one there, Did you hear the King speak nothing of me? How stands the King's Mind towards me? Pray how goes my Case? Then some tell him, the truth is, the King hears you are humbled, and that you are sorry for what you have done: At last the King looks out of the Window, and sees the Malefactor, and says, Is this the Traytor? One says, Yes, if it please your Majesty, this is the Man, that is humbled, and pleads for Mercy, and desires nothing so much as Favour. Hereupon, the King being full of Mercy, tells him, The truth is, his Pardon is a drawing, and coming towards

wards him. With that his Heart leaps in his Belly, and his Heart is enlarged towards his Majesty, and he says, God bleſs your Majesty; never was there ſuch a favourable Prince to ſo poor a Traytor. His Heart leaps for Joy, becauſe his Pardon is coming towards him. Haply it is not ſealed yet: Now when it is ſealed, and all done, the King calls him in, and delivers it.

So it is with a poor Sinner, he is the Malefactor. You that have committed High-Treaſon, you think not of it: But take heed, God will purſue you one day. Haply God lets you alone for the preſent, but he will ſurprize you on a ſudden, and Conſcience will pluck thee by the Throat, and carry thee down to Hell. And now the Lord purſues him with a heavy Stroke and Indignation, and let fly at his Face, and ſets Conſcience at work as a Purſuivant, and that ſays, Theſe are thy Sins, and to Hell thou muſt go: God hath ſent me to execute thy Soul. Now the poor Soul ſees he can no way eſcape from the Lord, and to purchaſe any Favour he ſees it impoſſible; therefore he is reſolved to lye down at God's Feet, and hope. Now Hope is a faculty of the

Soul to look out for Mercy: As a Man that is in expectation of the coming of his Friend, goeth to the top of a Hill, looks round about him, to see if he can understand any thing of his Friend: So the Soul hopes and waits, and stretches it self out for Mercy. When will it be, Lord? When will this Pardon come? The Soul gets up, and stands as it were a tiptoe: O when will it come, Lord?

How does God stir up the Heart to hope? It's worth the while to consider how this is maintained.

First, The Lord sweetly stays the Heart, and perswades it that his Sins are pardonable, and that the good he Wants may be supplied; this is a great support to the Soul. Hope is always of a Good to come. Now when a poor Sinner sees his Sins, the number of them, the nature of them, the vileness of them, the cursedness of his Soul, that he can take no rest; he sees no Rest in the Creature, nor in himself. Though he pray all Day, yet he cannot get the Pardon of one Sin. The Soul is out of any Expectation of Pardon, or Power of Mercy in any thing he hath or doth: Though all Means, all Helps, though all Men and Angels should join together; yet they

they cannot pardon one Sin of his. Now the Lord lifts up his Voice, and says from Heaven, thy Sins are pardonable. O the Infiniteness of God's Power ! though the Guilt of Sin is powerful to condemn the Soul. But when the infinite Power of the Lord is considered, as able to over-power all his Sins, this lifteth up the Heart in some Expectation that the Lord will shew Mercy to a Man ; though it is a hard thing to hope, when the Soul is thus troubled, (Can this Heart be broken ? Can these Sins be pardoned ? Can this Soul be saved ? Now comes in the Power of God. God can pardon them. Never measure the Power of God by that shallow Conceit of thine. All things are possible to God, though not to Men. And as it is said of *Abraham*, *He hoped above Hope* ; he looked to the Lord that was able to do what he had promised : He considered not that he had a dead Body, but that he had a living God to hope on. Justice cannot be so severe to revenge thee, as Mercy is gracious to do good unto thee. If thy Sins be never so many, God's Justice never so great ; yet Mercy is above all thy Sins, above all thy Rebellions. This may support thy Soul.

So

So there you have the first ground to stir up Hope; thy Sins are pardonable. There is more Power in God to shew Mercy to thee, than Power in Sin to destroy thee. The Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to *save that which was lost*; it was the scope of his coming. Now saith the broken and humble Sinner, I am lost. Did Christ come to save Sinners? Then Christ must fail of his end, or I of my Comfort. God says, *Come to me all that are weary and heavy laden*. I am weary: Unless the Lord intended good to me, why did he invite me, and bid me come? Surely he means to shew Mercy to me.

O take heed of Despair. Question thy Estate thou mayest, thou must; but to cast away all hope is very heinous in the Eyes of the Lord. Cast away all carnal Confidence thou must, and yet thou must hope. *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for in the Lord, &c.* The Lord takes this very ill at our Hands. Thou goest to the deep dungeon of thy Corruption, and there thou sayest these Sins can never be pardoned: I am still proud, and more stubborn: This distress God seeth not, God succoureth not, his Hand cannot reach, his Mercy cannot save.

save. Now mark what the Prophet saith to such a perplexed Soul, *Isa. 40. 27. Why sayest thou, thy way is hid from the Lord?* The Lord saith, *Why sayest thou so? The young Man shall faint and be weary; but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their Strength.* Is any thing too hard for the Lord? You wrong God exceedingly: You think it's matter of Humility, to count your self so vile. Can God pardon such a Wretches Sin as mine? Mark that place of the Psalmist: they spake against the Lord, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the Wilderness?* They spake not against themselves, but against the Lord. So we speak against God, and charge God himself. It is true, says the Soul, *Manasseth* was pardoned, *Paul* was converted, God's Saints have been received to Mercy: But can my Sin be pardoned? Can my Soul be quickened? No, no, my Sins are greater than can be pardoned, saith the despairing Soul. Consider how injurious this is to God, to make the power of Sin greater to condemn thee, than the power of God to save thee. To make the power of Satan stronger to ruinate thee, than the power of God to relieve thee, and succour thee.

And

And what can you say more? And what can you do more against the Lord? Is not this to make God an underling to Satan, and to Sin? This is just to say, The Almightyness of God is weaker than the Weakness of Sin; the Sufficiency of God is weaker than the Malice of Satan. It is so; poor humble Sinners many times will make bitter Complaints this way; and they think they speak against themselves. No, no, they speak against the Lord. They speak against the Lord, when they said, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the Wilderness?* So you speak in this desperate manner: Why truth, Lord, this proud Heart will never be humbled, if any thing would have wrought, it would have been done e'er this Day. How many Sermons, how many Mercies, how many Judgments, how many Prayers? And yet this proud Heart, this stubborn Heart will not be reformed. You think you speak against your selves now: No, no, you speak against the Lord. And know, this is one of the greatest Sins thou committest, to say thy Sins cannot be forgiven.

Secondly, As this Sin is injurious to God, so it's dangerous to thy

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own Soul, it is that which takes up the Bridge, and cuts off all Passages, and there can no spiritual Comfort nor Consolation come into the Soul of a poor Sinner, *Luke 3. 15. Every Ditch must be filled, and then all Flesh shall see the Salvation of the Lord.* What are these Ditches? Why nothing else but those deep Gulfs and Ditches of Despair: And unless these be filled, no Man can see the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is, this Despair of the Soul, is that which cuts the Sinews of Man's Comfort, and takes off the Power and Edge of all the Means of Grace; it daunts all a Man's Endeavours; nay, it plucks up Endeavours by the very roots: For that which a Man despairs of, he will never labour after. It's here, as with a Man in the pangs of Death: Unto such a Man, as all things are unavailable for his good: His Bed will not ease him, Meat will not refresh him, Chafing will not revive him; at last we say he is gone, he is a dead Man; Friends leave him, Physicians leave him: They may go and pray for him, and mourn for him, but they cannot recover him. So this despair of Soul makes a Man cast off all Hope, and lye down in a forlorn Condition, expecting

expecting no Good to come. Alas, saith the poor Soul, what skilleth for a Man to pray? What profiteth it a Man to read? What benefit in all the means of Grace? The truth of it is, the Stone is rolled upon me, and my Condemnation is sealed for ever, and therefore I will never look after Christ, Grace and Salvation any more. Let him come to hear the Word, and mark how he casts off the benefit of it. It was marvellous, seasonable and profitable, it was the good Word of God unto such as have share therein: Why then may not you expect benefit therefrom? No, saith the Soul, the time of Grace is past, the Day is gone. If Ministers would pray for him, and good People pray for him, he bids them save their Labour; for Hell is his Portion, and his Condemnation is sealed in Heaven. See now and consider what desperate danger Despair brings to a poor Heart, and carries him beyond the reach of Mercy. That's a sweet passage of *David's*, Psalm 77. 7. *Will the Lord cast me off for ever? I said this is my Infirmitie*, saith the Text. The word in the Original, *This is my Sicknesse*, as who shall say, This would be my Death; What, is Mercy gone for

for ever? Then my Life is gone, then is all my Comfort gone, my Hope gone: Therefore take heed of this, it takes off the edge of all our Endeavours and God's Ordinances that might do us good.

Secondly, This marvellously condemns that great Sin of Presumption; a Sin more frequent, and if it be possible, more dangerous. The Presumption of carnal Hypocrites that bolster themselves up with marvellous boldness in their course. It is as true here, and I beseech you observe it, as they said, *Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands*: Despair hath slain his thousands, but Presumption his ten thousands. That Men may Swear, and Lie, and Cozen, and break all the Commands, and yet hope to be saved. They hope Grace will save them, and yet resist Grace. They hope Jesus Christ will save them, and yet oppose Christ. This is that which hath slain many thousands among us: And they are few that have not split upon this Rock. And therefore I say, this serves to reprove the baseness of such Hypocrites that boast themselves, and compare their hopes with the hopes of the Saints. It is true, say they, I can-

not

not walk so freely, I cannot repeat a Sermon, I have not those Parts that they have; yet I hope to be saved as well as they. This is that which hath slain so many thousands of Souls that are now roaring in Hell; and they may thank presumption for it.

Now this Hope is not the Hope of the Saints. The Hope of the Saints is a grounded Hope; but these Hopes hang upon some idle Pleas, and foolish Pretences, and some carnal Reasons: But I tell you they will fail, and sink into the bottomless Pit e'er they are aware. It is the Command and Counsel of Peter, That every Man should be ready to give an account of his Faith and Hope that is in him. Look to the Reasons that carry you, and to the Arguments that persuade you; see they be not groundless and foolish Hopes. You hope to be saved, and you hope to go to Heaven, and you hope to see the Face of God with Comfort. Look about, I say; good Hope hath good Reasons, grounded Hope grounded Reasons.

Thirdly, The Saints of God many times are deprived of Comfort: Not because God withholds it, but because they put it from themselves, and will not have it though he offer it.

t: As David, *My Soul refused Com-* Psal. 77.

fort: He was as a fullen Child that will not eat his Milk, because he cannot have it in the golden Dish. So sometimes, and because God doth not for us what we would, we will have nothing all. These are the main Hindrances, and I might add many more: For carnal Reason is very fruitful this way, and we through our own Folly, and the Devil's Craft, are apt to abuse things, and to make them Hindrances in our way to Happiness eternal. I come now to the Cures of all these Impediments, where, if we had the Wisdom and Care we should have, we might break through them all to Christ. The Means (especially) are four, whereby we may be inwardly strengthened against them all, and be at last able to overcome, and put them to foil for ever.

The first Cure and Help is this; Helps to we must not look too long, nor pore come to too much, or unwarrantably upon Christ. our own Corruptions within, so far as to be feared or disheartened by them from coming to the Riches of God's Grace. For this is a sure and everlasting Truth, that whatsoever sight of Sin unfits a Man for Mercy, when

when he may take it, and it is offered, that sight of Sin is ever sinful, tho' we have never so fair an outside of Sorrow and deep Humiliation. Namely, as when we think, and say, (as often we do) Had a Soul so thorowly humbled, and bruised, and softened, and so forth, I could do well enough. And thus the Devil keeps us in Sin, by poring too long and much upon our Sins; as thinking thereby to get from them. But such a course is a sinful course. Tell not me of Sorrow, and Repentance, and Humiliation; all that Sorrow, and Humiliation, and Repentance, is naught, that keeps a Man from receiving Mercy when there is need, and it is offered. See this in *Abraham*: He had this Promise, that he should have a Son in his old Age: And *He being not weak in Faith, regarded not his old Age, nor Deadness, nor the Barrenness of Sarah's Womb, but believed in him who had promised it.* There he rests, and there he stays; he saw his Body was dead, yet there was a living Promise; And what though *Sarah's Womb* was barren, yet the Promise was fruitful. He knew his own Deadness and her Barrenness; but he stood not long there. As *Abraham* therefore, so

The godly
Sorrow,
what it is.

Rom. 4. 19.

Faith, regarded not his old Age, nor Deadness, nor the Barrenness of Sarah's Womb, but believed in him who had promised it. There he rests, and there he stays; he saw his Body was dead, yet there was a living Promise; And what though *Sarah's Womb* was barren, yet the Promise was fruitful. He knew his own Deadness and her Barrenness; but he stood not long there. As *Abraham* therefore, so

we may see our Sins, and consider our many Weaknesses, but must not so settle upon them, or consider of them, as to be hindered by them from coming to God for Mercy, which he freely offers us, and we stand in need of: For while the Soul of a Man is daily plodding upon his own Misery and distempered Life, these two things follow.

First, Stop the stream of God's Promise, and let down the Sluce against it, so that the Promise cannot enter into us.

1.

And, Secondly, We set open the stream and floodgate of Corruption, and make it to run most violently down, and to flood in upon us; and in the end to overwhelm us. Now the Inconvenience arising hereby, is enough to slay the best Christian in the World; for what can a Man get out of his Corruption? He can have no more thereof than is to be had; and it is in vain to look for Comfort where it is not to be had: All this, and the least of all this, may dishearten us, but will never encourage us, or put Heart into us. See the Humility and Wisdom of the Woman of *Canaan*; she follows Christ; but he listens not to her, but gives her a fore

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Mat. 15. 27.

fore Foil, and calls her *Dog* ; and
 faith, you Gentiles are *Dogs* ; and
 the Gospel of Grace and Salvation
 the *Childrens Bread*. Now if she
 had only considered the Words of
 Christ, and only looked into her
 self and her own Baseness, she had
 never come to have received either
 Mercy or Comfort from him. But
 she faith, Truth Lord, I am a *Dog* ;
 yet the *Dogs* eat of the *Crumbs* that
 fall from their Masters Table. That
 was her sure Resolution : Where
 there are two things which express
 and set forth the frame of a gracious
 Heart, a Heart that is truly wise
 attend to its own Baseness with
 Faith : And that is her *Humility* and
Wisdom : As if she had said, Thou
 sayest I am a *Gentile*, and a *Dog* ;
 I confess it : There's her *Humility* ;
 Yet though I am a *Dog*, I will not
 out of doors, but lye under the Table
 for Mercy : There's her *Wisdom* ;
 And thus she ; and so we trust, as
 should when our Corruptions (as she
 said) flood in upon us, and we
 our selves quite lost, and damned
 our Sins, we must then say, in truth
 Lord, I am as bad as thy Word
 make me, yet let me not fly from
 Mercy, but lye at the Feet of my Saviour

viour's Mercy, till he look upon me
once upon Peter, Luke 22. 61.

It is fit, and we ought to see our
Sins: But stay we must not too long
there: See them we must, but not
fasten on them, so as to shackle us
from coming to Christ. I have said
it, and will say it, That that sight of
Sin which doth not drive a Man to
Christ for Mercy, is ever sinful. La-
bour therefore to see thy Sins, and
that thus.

First, See thy Sins in the Royal How to see
Law, as in the right Glass; a Glass Sin aright.
that will present them such as they
be; and look not off till thou hast
seen them so.

Secondly, So see them, as that by
such a holy gaze at them, thou may'st
see an utter Insufficiency in thy self
to satisfie for them.

Thirdly, And so see them, that
thou may'st by that sight behold an
absolute necessity of Christ to suc-
cour thee, and then away speedily
to him that can only help thee, and
dwell no longer on thy Sins, but go
to the Throne of Grace, where is
plentiful Redemption, whence Issue
our Pardons in abundance to remove
that Guilt that Sin hath brought
upon thy Soul; and where is Power
enough

enough to enable thee to be more than Conqueror over thy Corruption. Briefly, every Soul should be thus; It is true, Lord, my Sins are many and great, for I have departed from thee the Fountain of Blessings. But shall I go on, and so further from thee, and persist in evil? God forbid. All this while I speak to broken-hearted Christians. You profane ones, you have your Portion already, and shall have more of it in Hell hereafter; therefore for a while stand you by, and let the Children come to their Bread.

Isa. 66. 2.
opened.

The Lord looks to him that is of a humble and contrite Heart, and he trembleth before him. A poor Creature cannot but observe every Word of God, and tremble at every Truth whose Meditation is such as this. Here is Salvation indeed, but it is mine; here is Mercy, but I have no part in so great Mercy; and thus I shake at every apprehension of every Word of God, concluding certainly that he shall never enjoy any part of it. But mark what the Text saith, *The Lord looks at such a trembling Soul*; that is, he casts sweet Intimations of his Goodness and Love into him, and saith, Thou poor trembling

Sinner

Sinner, to thee be it spoken, I have an Eye toward thee in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore he further saith,

Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, Isa. 40. 2. speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her Warfare is accomplished, and her iniquity is pardoned: Tell Jerusalem she is accepted, tell her what my mind is.

And here he goes on, and saith to his Minister, speak to the Heart of such an humbled Penitential, and tell him from Me, nay, tell him from Heaven, and tell him from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from under the Hand of the Spirit, that his Person is accepted, and his Sins are all of them done away, and he himself shined upon in great Mercy.

Here Ephraim is the Picture of a Soul truly humbled, in whose Behaviour we may see the Behaviour of a true Penitent toward God, and God's dealing towards him. The Text saith, *Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself (there's the Heart broken and thirsty) thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; turn thou to me, and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my Thigh, I* Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20.

was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my Youth. Thus the Sinner, as if he should have said, I am the Wretch that have seen all the means of Grace in abundant measure, and yet never profited under the Hand of any. The Lord hath corrected me, but I would not be tamed; and he instructed me, but I would not learn. Lord, turn me, thou art my God; I have nothing in myself; nay, now I see the Evils which before I never perceived; and I observe the Baseness of my Course, which before I considered not. Now I am ashamed of my abuse of Grace so plainly revealed: I am even now confounded with the sense of those Abominations my Soul did formerly take pleasure in. This may be conceived to be the mourning of a poor much-broken Sinner. And now mark God's answer: *Ephraim is my Son, he is a pleasant Child: For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy upon him.* As much as to say, I observed all those secret Sighs, considered all those Tears, I heard all those Prayers, and take notice of all those Complaints, and my Bow-

els even yearn towards this poor dejected Sinner, an humble Soul that seeks to me for Mercy. The truth is, I will embrace him with my loving Kindness. This for the first means of Help.

Now, the second means of Cure *Help 2.* is this, Take heed of judging thy Estate by carnal Reason without the Rule, which is commonly the fashion and fault of poor distressed Spirits, who pass fearful Sentence against themselves upon groundless Arguments, and say, I never found it, I feel no such thing, and I fear it is not so. But in this we hear but carnal Pleas, coming out of Satan's Forge, and by his help, from our selves, against our selves, for we judge our selves by them. But, I say, Take heed of this Wile of Satan's, and make conscience of this as much as of any other fault, as much as of Swearing, Stealing, Whoring, or Murder; for this is as truly Sin as those, though not so great; yet a far greater Sin than you imagine. Consider this thou humble-hearted Christian, for to thee I speak. Therefore when upon these grounds thou concludest that thy Case and Estate is naught, see and consider against how

The Danger of judging our selves rashly.

many Commandments thou offendest. First, Thou dishonoureth God, and the work of his Grace, by denying that which God hath done for thee: Also, and speakest *unreverently* against him; besides, thou art a Murderer, for that thou woundest thine own Soul. Further, thou robbest thy self of much Comfort, and so art a *Thief*; and thou bearest *false Witness* against thy self, yea, against Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, and the work of Grace already wrought in thee. Also, thou joinest with the Devil against the Lord Jesus Christ. Are these no Sins?

But thou wilt say, I speak as I think. Yet that hinders not, but that thou bearest false witness. As we see, if a Man affirm such a one is a Drunkard, and knows it not, this Man bears false witness, because though the Man be indeed a Drunkard, yet is it more than he knows. So thou say'st that thou hast nothing, when thou dost but only fear it, and suspect it, and dost not feel it. I speak this the rather, because of the sinful Distemper that creeps in upon the Hearts of many broken-hearted Christians; and so as that out of a self-will'd road of carnal

carnal Reason, and a vile haunt that they have gotten, their Hearts are perswaded that they do well to do so, and that they can never be well except they do so.

But they that are such (mark what I say) when Reason is plain against them, and plain Scripture evidenceth the contrary, do not so much attend what the Minister saith, as they stand and invent how they may answer the Minister; and (so) put away their own Mercy. Therefore let the Fear of God fall upon every poor Soul that heareth this; and let him know, that howsoever he hath taken or given leave to himself, or taken up the Wasters, by taking up Pleas against the Truth; yet now he is to change the course, to go aside, and to mourn apart for his Misprision: Also to wonder that the Lord hath not all this while taken away all the Comforts of his Grace, and all the Motions of his Spirit from him. The Prophet *David* prays the Lord to *turn away his Eyes from beholding Vanity*. Now if God must do that; 37. that is, turn away our Eyes that they see not; much more must he turn away our Hearts that they attend not on lying Vanities. We must attend

God, and the Voice of his Spirit ; but to listen to carnal Pleas (which we have no warrant to do) is to Sin deeply, and to Hurt our own Soul both deeply and dangerously. No Man would deal with a-Cheater. Carnal-Reason is a Cheater, therefore we should not heed it, unless we would resolve to be cozened. And now if the danger of the Sin cannot make us do this, let the Sorrow that will come of it constrain us. The Prophet saith, *Behold, all you that kindle a Fire, and that compass your selves about with the Sparkles that ye have kindled ; this shall you have at my Hand, ye shall lye down in Sorrow.* These are the Prophet's Words, say, God's by him. And now I will tell you what is meant by *Sparkles*, and what by *Fire*. In the old Law (as some of you know) there was heavenly Fire kept continually upon the Altar of the Sanctuary, (which shadowed out the Will and Wisdom of God in his Word,) and there was also strange Fire, that is, divers Sparkles of Men's own Imaginations and Conceits. Concerning this every poor Creature carries his Tinder-box about him, and is ever kindling of it. But such a Fire
much

Ma. 50.11.

much provoked God once, and so doth still. So saith the Text; in which are two things. First, That the Heart of Man will naturally invent carnal Reasons and Pleas against it self, and be settled upon them as upon the dregs of a Vessel that is at a bottom. Secondly, That the issue that followeth is fearful: For it is said, *This shall ye have of mine Hand, ye shall lye down in your own Sorrow.* Now then, when the Scriptures are clear, and Reasons upon it evident, yet you will have your own Devices and Ways; thus much I must tell you, *You shall lye down in Sorrow* at last, and you may thank your selves for it. Away then with your Tinder-boxes, abase your selves before the Throne of Grace, and be at last wise to Salvation so nigh.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, (saith God by his Prophet) come and buy without Money, take of the Well of the Water of Life, and live for ever freely. Many a poor Minister, while he preaches the good Word of God, would fain leave his Commodity behind him, while he saith, You must have it; and you shall have it; it is your Portion, and belongs of right unto you. Thus we are fain even to force

God's Favour upon you. Hereupon we beseech you to believe, and we entreat you for the Lord Jesus sake to receive Mercy, and to humble your Hearts.

Thus we deal with you in Fatherly Terms. But will you take so great and so good a Commodity from us?

No, Beloved; many sweet Promises, and many admirable precious Things of Grace and Salvation are revealed, but Men are negligent to take for themselves: In this case our Markets stand upon our selves; we pass not to lay out any thing here to benefit: Some carnal Plea or other marring all. This argues plainly the small Estimation that we have of Christ. But the poor hungry Sinner, one that is apprehensive of his own Weakness and Feebleness, longs till the *Feast-day* cometh, that he may partake of these and such Delicates. Oh how carefully doth he listen, and how diligently doth he attend what the Minister saith? And if the Word come home to his Conscience, enlightning his Heart, and reproving him of his ways; then he cries out; Oh, I am in great Trouble; good Lord comfort me: I am full of Doubts;

Doubts ; good Lord resolve me : I am ignorant in spiritual Things ; good Lord teach me : I have a proud, stout, stubborn Heart ; good Lord humble me. He was never better than now. Therefore take this for a general Rule ; that a good Heart is never better at ease than when the Word works most, and most biting-ly. Contrarily, a wicked graceless Person is never better than when the Word works least, or never a whit upon him. But when he thinks the Minister will come close to his Sore and Soul, he will not be at home that Day, he will be sure to be out of the Town, or not in place. He knows the Word would awaken him, and affright him, and he cannot bear the blow, therefore he keeps away, and shuns the hearing of the Word, when it should work to his Reformation any way.

And now for a third Help, let *Help 3.*
us be marvellously wary and watch-ful that we enter not into the Lists of, and dispute with Satan, upon Points which are beyond the reach of Man, as thus to say ; I am not elected, therefore God will not look upon me to do me any good. Or, it is a vain thing for me to use the means of
C 5, Mercy,

Mercy, my time of Mercy being out. Oh the Days of Grace that I have seen, when the Lord knocked sweetly at my Heart, and was pleased to reveal my Sins unto me at such a time! But then (hard-hearted Wretch that I was) I shut the Door upon him, and now he is gone and past, and now there is no hope for the visit of Grace, or that Christ should return again to shew me any Mercy. If the Devil can have thee here, all thy Comfort is gone; for upon this ground a Man shall never receive rest to his Soul, come what Days will. And how can he? For if he cannot judge of, or know Comfort, how shall I (the Minister) be able to give, or he (the Hearer) to take it?

And here look as it is with a poor travelling Man, one that falleth among Thieves, who come and promise to carry him a nearer way, but bring him into a Wood whither no Passengers come, and there they do what they will unto him: So it is with a poor Soul, when the Devil gets him into these unwarranted Disputes, as it were, large Wildernesses of God's eternal Counsel, where are no Passengers, and therefore he cannot but be void of Helps and Succour, and

and so as that Satan may now exercise his full Pleasure, and whole Malice, by terrifying his poor desolate Soul. To avoid which straits, observe these three Rules.

First, Let the Soul in this case bear upon the Almightyness of the Power of God, who said to *Abraham*, *I am God All-sufficient*. For if thou be perswaded of the All-sufficiency of God, that assurance cannot but stay thee (slipping) from falling. And here remember that God can do more than thou canst think. He is able, and doth thee good, though thou know it not. And further, consider that the Soul cannot doubt of God's Will, but with that very doubt makes some question of his Power. This for the first Rule. I. Gen. 17.

For the second. And secondly, It bids check to thine own Heart for meddling with God's Secrets, and for prying so into his Closet of hidden Counsels. For no Man should go beyond his Bounds; and it appertains not to thee to look into this Ark of Matters sealed up. *Secret* Deut. 29. *things belong to God, but revealed things belong to us.* And who hath known the Mind of God? Saith Paul. 2. 1 Cor. 13. 2, 16. Mark this, you that will be climbing up

up the Ladder of God's eternal Pre-destination, and going up into the Skies to know what God's secret Mind is. Keep your Stations wisely; for neither the Devil, nor all the Devils in Hell, ever knew the Mind of the Lord. When *Jonah* cried against *Nineveh*, saying, Within forty Days all you; that is, all you Drunkards, and Adulterers, and Murderers, and others, shall be destroyed: Mark here how the King resolves; his Words are, *Who can tell if the Lord will repent, and stay his fierce Wrath, that we perish not?* Therefore when the Devil tells thee thus much, and faith, God hath appointed a way to Salvation, and you have had the means, and did not profit by them, therefore God will never shew you Mercy, nor give you Grace. Thus the Devil. But how can he tell that? Surely all the Devils in Hell cannot tell it: Say with thy self, Let me walk in that course which God hath appointed and commanded, and do that which I ought; then I may say, and with Comfort say it; who knows but God may break the Heart of a proud, rebellious, contrarying Sinner, such as mine is, and such as I am? None verily, but God knows whether

whether or no. The third and last Rule follows.

Thirdly, Therefore measure not the Riches of God's Love, and the Sweetness of his saving Grace according to your own Conceits; nor do you think that because you cannot conceive it, therefore God will not do it, for *Isaiab* saith, *Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts*; that is, All you wicked ones, and you that have lived lewdly, return from your wicked Ways, and vain Thoughts, and he will abundantly shew Mercy. 3-
Isa. 51. 7, 8, 9.

But will the Lord pardon all my Sins, Object. saith the doubting Soul? *I cannot think it: If I my self were a God, I should never pass by such intolerable things as have been done by me.*

But I answer: Because you cannot, *Ans.* you think God cannot, or will not: Yes, saith the Lord, I can abundantly pardon: For my Thoughts are not your Thoughts, nor my Ways as your Ways. A poor Creature thinks his Sins are unpardonable, and that he shall never get assurance of God's Favour, or hope of his Love. But you are *Men*, saith the Lord, and have finite Thoughts; but I am a *God*, and my Mercies infinite, when you think I will have no Mercy. But

Object.

But were ever any such received to Mercy as I? saith the drooping Soul; and therefore why should I be the only Man?

Answ.

To this I say: when Christ had wrought many strange Miracles, the People said there were never any such things done in *Israel*. And therefore it is plain, not to be doubted, that God can do things that never like were done: *He doth great things past finding out, and wondrous without number*, saith *Job*: And therefore judge not either God's Power or Love by thy scantling.

Job 9. 10.

The best Christians are most suspicious of themselves, and none fuller of Doubts and Fears, than those that have least cause to fear or doubt that their Estates are broken and bad. Therefore Satan makes it his chief work to grieve and terrifie such. Besides, their own distrustful Hearts are always ready to join issue with his false Reports against them, railing false Surmises against themselves, and putting Mercy from them; as if they were hired by the Devil to take his part in pleading against their own future Salvation. Therefore it is worth the time to hear what *David* saith,

Psal. 42. 8. The Lord shall command his

Love

Loving-kindness in the Morning. It is a Phrase taken from *Princes* and great Men, whose Words are a Law of Command. For so God will send forth, as by a Commandment, his Loving-kindness to a truly humble Christian. As if it should be said, Go, Love and everlasting Mercy, take thy Commission; and I charge thee go to that poor broken-hearted Sinner, go to that poor, hungry and thirsty Soul: Go, and prosper, and prevail, and stamp my Love upon his Heart, and there let it stand whether he will or no. Thus the Lord charges his Loving-kindness to do good to poor Sinners; and by his own Almighty-ness bears up the Soul, when it is ready to sink under the weighty Burden of its many Transgressions.

But what? Shall I have Mercy? *Object.* No, no, (saith the doubting Heart) Will the Lord Jesus accept me? No surely. Could I pray so, and so, and had I these and these Parts, and could I perform Duties after this and this manner, then there were some hope; but all is contrary, and therefore wo and alas, there is no Mercy for me!

But to answer this also, Let me *Answer.* tell thee, whoever thou art, that God invites:

invites thee in particular, as by Name, and that all the Sweetness in Christ, and in his precious Promises, appertain to thy poor Soul; and thou hast as great an Interest in them as any Servant of God in the World whatsoever.

No, no, saith the trembling Soul, I cannot believe that such a Wretch as I, shall, or can go to Heaven; it cannot be. Heaven shall rather fall, than I come there. Thus the discouraged Sinner knocks for Mercy, and shuts the Door against himself.

And now, when all carnal Reasonings, and high-soaring Imaginations, (as *Paul* calls them) have raised up strong Holds against Mercy and Comfort; when the Word cannot for the present settle Peace in the unquiet Soul, God is made at last to command his Loving-kindness, and send it with a Commission from Heaven; and to say unto it, I charge you break open the Doors of such a reluctant Sinner, rend off that veil of Ignorance that is before his Eyes; silence all his Doubts and Fears: And when this is done, I charge you go home to that broken Soul, and to cheer and refresh it with the sense of my sweet Favour; and with the assurance of my Love to fill it.

While

While we were Enemies, saith the Rom. 5. 8. Apostle, *Christ died for us.* And here the Lord sends from Heaven to a poor miserable Creature, and saith, Commend my Love, commend my Mercy to such a distressed Soul, and tell it, Though it hath been an Enemy to me, yet I am a Friend to it. Tell it, Though it hath been a Traytor to me, I have been a good King to it. And tell it, that though it hath been a Rebel to me, I have yet been a loving God to it. Tell the Man (whose Heart that is) that his Sins are pardoned, his Person accepted, and that his Soul shall be saved. Tell him his Sighs and Groans are not lost, and that his Prayers are heard in Heaven. Let him know that the Lord Jesus dyed for Sinners when they were Sinners. Make all this good to his Soul, I charge you before you come back. So much for the third Help.

The fourth Cure is this. And it *Help 4.* is especially to be observed by a Christian above all, in his proceedings with himself in Barr of Judgment; and that is: Pass no hasty Sentence against thy self, but according to the Evidence of the Word. If thou art to be approved, let the Word of God do it; And let the same Word examine

mine thee, if thou comest to be examined. If this Word speak for thee, no matter, though all Men and Angels speak against thee, and if it condemn thee, no matter who speaks for thee: By it, thou risest or fallest to thine own Master. What though some wrangling Fellow step in, and will be determining Causes before the Judge comes: Shall his Word stand? No: Therefore a wise Man will stay till the Judge himself come, and wait upon the Judgment of his Mouth. Deal thou no other wise with thine own Soul: Put not the case to be tried by a company of peevish carnal Reasons, but stay till the Word (which is the Judge) come and judge thy self by that, and hold to that for thy Life, and the Life of thy Soul. *The Light is that which manifesteth all things*, saith the Apostle. His meaning is: The Light of the Word, and the Evidence of God's Truth, manifested to the Souls of God's People; these properly are the Judges: The other are but wrangling Cases, not to be admitted. And here sense and feeling, grounded upon carnal matter, are like Fogs and Mists, which make a Man in such that he cannot see his way, but up

Eph. 4.13.

on clearing up his State and Condition is open before him ; and then it is manifest what it is, *Learn of me* Mat. 11. 29 (saith our Saviour) *and you shall find rest to your Souls* : And the Psalmist saith, *I will enquire what the Lord will say*. So say thou, I will not hearken what carnal Reason will say ; I will hear what God saith. The want of this, is the cause why we have so many Distractions and Disquiets, and why we are still in our doubtings ; even because he that teacheth, and can perswade with us, a deluder.

And hereof it is, that the poor Soul saith ; What, shall I have an Interest in Christ ? Shall I have a Title to the Promises ? Nay, this belongs to those that are broken-hearted. Indeed if I had such power against Corruption, such heavenly-mindedness, and this and that precious Grace, there were some hope ; but I am so full of Weakness, and many times led captive by such a rebellious Heart, that it is too apparent I never had saving Grace : Nay, I fear I never shall have it truly wrought in my Soul.

This you say, poor Soul ; But who told you so ? And where learned you that Religion ? I am sure you never

ver learn'd it of Christ. For who
 or what word tells you, if I have such
 a load of Corruptions, I shall never
 have Grace? Not the Word of Christ,
 I am sure: Wherefore I charge you
 hold to the truth of the Word:
 Learn of *me*, saith *Christ*, and put
 not your Cause to be decided by car-
 nal Reason; neither regard what it
 telleth you: For if you take that way,
 and turn not back, you can never
 come to Christ, no way to him that
 way. Learn of the Lord Christ
 (for his Word is faithful, and his
 Promise sure) and there you shall
 find a Tower of Rest as strong as
 Mount *Sion*. It is that Word
 whereby we shall be judged at
 the last great Day, when sense and
 feeling shall be cast over the Barr to
 Deceivers, and never come into Court
 again. And thus much of the four
 Cures. It rests that I now propound
 four Rules, by which a Man may
 know how to order himself, and
 to walk, that he may keep a straight
 course by the Word, and not turn
 aside to one Hand, or other, from that
 Guide of his way. And thus walk-
 ing, he may get into his Hands the
 Evidences that can assure him of
 Rest perpetual, and establish his Mind

with

with perfect Peace. For they work none Iniquity, that walk in this way.

Rules to direct a Christian how to use the Word of God for his Evidence, or Assurance, with Peace.

The first of these Rules teacheth to *Rule 1.*
 use the Word of God aright: For as thou must in all things that concern thy Soul repair to the Word; so thou must consider thine own Uprightness by it, and see what Work is in thy Soul that is able to answer the Word, and to testify that the work of Grace is there. And here be sure to take thy Soul at the best: Do not always pore upon the worst that is in it, nor upon thy Failings, nor that that can only accuse thee; but if there be any thing there that may justly speak for thee, neglect not that. It is an Injustice for any Court to hear one side and not another. The Scripture is a Text of Justice, and the Lord doth not lye at catch with his Children, but takes them at the best: As *Rom. 4. 22.* it is therefore said, that *Abraham believed the Promise, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness.* Indeed, as of *Gen. 12.* he had some doubtings; but

1 Pet. 3. 6.
Gen. 18.
12.

but God took him at the best : And speaks this of his Faith. So Sarah is spoken of, as of a gracious Woman, and of a pattern for Women, by calling her Husband *Lord* ; which was a sign of Reverence to her Husband, and an humble Heart to the Lord : And yet we read that she derided the Message of the Lord by the Angel : The Lord buries that, and only speaks of that which was to her Commendation, and so took her at her best too. Now as the Lord dealt with these, so should we with our selves : Whatsoever is found sincere and upright in us, that should we observe, as well as that which is not so ; nay, that rather and before the other. If a Man should have his Cause handled in any Court of Justice after this fashion ; namely, that (there) should only be observed what is failing in the Cause, and never that that makes for it ; the best Cause that is might go to the ground : Therefore the Court will hear all read : And every Bond or Bill that shall come in, and every Matter of Agreement, briefly, every thing : The cry will be Let all be read. Again, suppose a Man have a Bond or other Instrument in Court, and that the Lawyer only doth

both open and read the failings in it,
and that which seems to make against
the Party : If the Judge only hear that,
how can it but go against that side ?
Therefore that Party saith, Good
my Lord hear all. Now when all is
read, those Defects are corrected, and
the Cause goes well ; which had not
been so, if that Bond, or Deed, or
other Instrument had been read by
themselves, not thoroughly. So when Men
shall bring in so many and main In-
dictments against themselves, and
say, Oh what Pride and Stubborn-
ness is in my Heart ! Oh how weak
am I, and dull, and dead, and back-
ward to holy Duties ! Oh how care-
less of enjoying Communion with
God ! How negligent in sifting and
trying my own Heart, in watching
over my Senses, and mourning in se-
cret for my daily Failings ! Though
this were so, yet if Men will see no
more (and these too much) no mar-
vel if they trouble their own House,
or if Satan by their own Words judge
them. To such an one therefore
say, All that thou sayest may be
true, but art thou not troubled with
these failings ? And are they not the
greatest Grief that thy Soul hath ?
saith the poor Soul, I confess my
Heart

Heart is vexed, and my Soul grieved for them; and I could be content to be any thing that I could not be so. Now hear on this side, and take the best. For, as it is with a Man's Hand and the Staff, so it is here. I compare the Promise to a Staff: You know the back of a Man's Hand cannot take hold of the Staff; but the palm of his Hand can. So turn thou the right side of thy Soul to the Promise, and then thou may'st take by it: But we take not by it, because we turn the back side of our Hearts to the Promise: For then, the Soul saith, Oh my Stubbornness is great, and mine Inabilities grievous, and Corruptions many. But this is the wrong side; which will ever hinder thee from taking hold of the Promise. But turn to the right side, and then say, My Soul hates these, and my Soul is right-weary of them. O, this is the right side; turn to that, and thou art well. This for the first Rule.

Rule 2.

Now for the second; and secondly, Labour to have thy Conscience settled and established in that Truth which now out of the Word thou hast gotten to bear witness of the Work of Grace in thee. For if thou

be any want of the assurance of God's Love, and if the evidence of the Work of Grace come not roundly in, but there be some guilt of Sin still remaining; Conscience will make new Stirrs, and breed new Broils, and continually move and upquiet the Heart: Therefore as it is good to have our Judgment informed by the Word, when we see the Good that is in us, so it is meet we should make Conscience perswaded of it, so as Conscience may speak for us, and all be made straight. Otherwise, as the Debtor that is indebted to many Creditors, if he agree not with all, or with all save one, that one may come upon him as well as all the rest: So for the poor distressed Soul that lyes at the Mercy of the Lord, and is so deep in Arrears, and owes to the Law, that he cannot wind up; if he labour not to still Conscience, and what is else against him, in that every Point as well as in some; if he leave one undischarged, that one may set his Conscience against him, as well as a hundred.

The want of this, is cause why new Suits and new Bills are daily put in against us: Only because Conscience is not pacified, nor all quieted. And now take a poor Sinner that

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that hath all his Doubts and Objections answered; come to him, and say, Are all these all your Doubts and Objections? He will say, Yea. And are they all answered? Here he will say, Yea too. And have you now any thing to say against that which hath been made known unto you? No, not now. But say to him again, Did your Conscience say to you, It is a Sin to say you have no Grace? Here he demurs, and stops, and says, No, I dare not say so, but I rather say the contrary. And now mark what he says: All the Books are crost, and all Objections answered, and yet Conscience puts in a new Plea, because haply it was not satisfied to the full, and in every parcel of Aberration.

And now come to him again, and say, You are sometimes captivated by Sin, are you not? And are you willing to be at God's free dispose, and that he should pluck away all your Corruptions, as it were Shackles from you, are you not?

Oh, saith the poor Sinner, I must needs yield to that. Then I affirm to thy Soul, that this is a Work of true Grace. Here (therefore) let your Conscience be fully satisfied.

how satisfied? Thus: Cancel all Self-Accusations, and this will quit all Scores, and clear the Heart, scattering all Clouds that mist it. This will cast out all Cavils, and all new Bills against us: For if our Consciences condemn us not, then we have Boldness towards God. We must then stop the Mouth of Conscience; that is, be convinced, and agree, that it is a Sin to say, God hath not wrought this work of Grace in the Heart, when it is so clear he hath. For tho' sense and feeling be (as it sometimes will be) gone, yet Conscience remembers the Day and Year when the Sinner had a clear Evidence of God's Love, and therefore saith, Lord, thou knowest it, and thou didst say out of thy Word at such a time, that the Heart of this poor Soul was upright and sincere before thee.

And here it should be with a poor Sinner, as with a wise Man, when he would make his Lands sure unto him and his posterity by Evidences and Writings sealed; he is not content here only to have his Evidences in his own keeping, but will have them enrolled in Chancery, such a Year, and such a Day: That if he should lose his Deeds, he might be sure where to find

find them. So it should be with the distressed Soul; it should not only be willing to have all Objections to the contrary of it answered; but it should further get them Recorded in the Court of Conscience, as in Chancery; that when sense and feeling are lost, yet it may readily go to that High Court of Conscience, and there find the Day and Year when God's Love was made sure unto it. This for the second Rule.

Rule 3.

For the third: Thirdly, We should strive, and that mightily, to have our Hearts overpowered with the evidence that Reason and Conscience make good unto us; that so we may quietly receive, and calmly welcome it; yea, and yield and subject our Hearts to the truth of it. But here we all stick: And there are three things in the Soul of a Man; three, I say, that abet all these Quarrels and Oppositions against the Evidences of the Word in that Man. The first; for, 1. Reason Objects. 2. The second; Then Conscience Accuseth. And the third; 3. The Will of Man will not submit. And here we find by experience, that when a Man hath stilled Conscience, and silenced all Reasons to the contrary of his Peace,

yet such is the Iron of the stubborn Heart, that nothing can barr it; but still it maintains, and will, some gainfaying and some new quarrels against the Truth and it self. Besides, it keeps on foot even that that hath been long ago answered, and let down: Nay, that a Man would think had been buried in a deep Grave (as deep as Hell) never to rise again. Now in this case it is with a poor Sinner, as with a Man that hath a contentious Adversary. Haply the Cause that they two have in Hand, hath been tried in all Courts of Law, and at last comes to the Chancery; and there it is concluded against the cavilling Adversary, as in the other Courts; there all matters are as well stated and ordered as a Man would wish, and as an honest Man would grant: Yet will not this Man, that is so contentious, be so concluded, or so yield, but will to the Law again with a Back-Suit, and then, and upon that old Grudge, stake down all he hath, and sell all to his Shirt. His Will he will have whatever it cost him. Nor will he give over, till the Judge doth come to take notice of him, and so to cast out his Cause with himself, whom therefore

he commits to Prison, and saith, Sirrah, these matters were (all of them) long ago answered, and will you trouble us again, not with new Matters, but with old Quarrels?

Just so it is with the Heart even of a gracious Man sometimes, and one that is humbled in some measure, and could be content to yield to the commanding Power of God's Word, and to the Witness of his own Conscience: And therefore saith, My Condition is better than I thought it was; yet there is an old, proud, self-will'd Heart still in me; an Heart that will not be quieted nor laid unto; but still will be quarrelsome, and maintain the old Exception. For though all Reasons are well confuted, and Conscience bears witness it is so; and the Minister, as the Judge under Christ, cast out the Cause; yet (observe it) the poor distressed Sinner will keep the old road of objecting against himself: And though he hath been answered fully, and to every point, not many Hours before; yet he keeps old matters still fresh, and out of the Salt, till they yield a foul Scent to all that come within the Hearing of them. And thus, even when a Man would think

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he should not dare to come in Court with such old cashiered stuff; yet that proud self-will'd Heart will be doing still; nor will yield or give over. Have we not just cause then to labour our Hearts so far as to get them over-powered with the Authority of the Truth concerning whatsoever God reveals to them for their good? Oh therefore, poor Soul, do not reject the evidence which God makes known, and passeth upon thee for thy sure Welfare eternally. Do not, because thou hast not that Comfort that thou would'st, reject all; as if thou would'st have none at all. So then the fault here is not properly because thou canst not, but because thou wilt not receive the Promise: And this is that that so wracks and torments thy Spirit; this is that which breeds the Quarrel so hard to be compounded; and hence it is, that when Reason is satisfied, and Conscience convinced, yet the Soul is perplexed still. For put this Question to it, and say unto it; Are you perswaded that the Lord hath done you this good, that he will shew an everlasting Mercy to your Soul? And it will say no; and that all the World shall not perswade it of that.

Ministers are merciful (will such a distempered Soul say) and Christians are charitable, and loth to displease too much, or to discourage one in my case, or do to me as I should do to them: But did they know me indeed, they would never think thus of me: Certainly I shall never find it so. What? Have I Grace? All the World shall never perswade me to it. Mark what I say: This is meerly thy Pride and Self-willedness, that will not receive that good which God is willing to give thee. But repent, or this Pride of thy pettish Heart will cost thee dear, one Day; I wish not.

Object.

But some will say, How can you make this Pride? We are ever complaining of, and condemning our selves; and can this be Pride?

Ans.

Yes, I say, (and mark what I say) it is intolerable Pride against the Majesty of Heaven: And this I make good by these two things. For, First, For a Man to follow his own Conceits and Self-willedness against the Truth, the force of Reason, and the witness of the Servants of God, and his own Conscience, cannot but be Pride.

Secondly,

Secondly, And for a Man, because he hath not what he would, to be (therefore) off the Hinges so, as to throw away all God's Kindness, and to deny the Grace that is given him: And this because he cannot be Conqueror as he desires; is not this Pride? That measure of Mercy which God hath already shewed to thy Soul, is incomprehensible, beyond Man's reach; and yet because thou canst not have what thou would'st, thou wilt have nothing at all. Just as if a Man that hath the Law on his side, and his Estate settled on him, should, because his Evidences are not written in great Golden Letters, nor in the largest Royal Paper, throw all away. This is your case: For so you, because you have not so much of Grace, or with such a sweetness as you would, you deny you have any. But have you no Humility, because none to your Mind, or not so much, or not in such a manner as you require? Oh Pride; and Pride in the highest degree!

These things consider'd, labour to bring your Hearts more down in a holy Subjection to God's measure and time. And think it your Duty, as well to receive Comfort when God

offers it upon good terms, as to do any Duty commanded. And know, that it is as truly a Sin (though of a higher size) to reject Mercy when God offers it, as to kill a Man, which God hath forbidden. I say, Not as much; for I know there is odds in the degree. Therefore you (the Saints of God) that have been thus pester'd, and thus posselt to become your own Enemies, remember (when your Hearts begin thus to slide away) to take your Hearts unto you, and not to give them the Reins at such desperate Conclusions against God and Conscience. Deal better with you Souls, and say, Good Lord, this is the proud unyielding Distemper of this vile Heart of mine. For, what would I have? Is not God's Word clear in this Point, and my Conscience satisfied? Do not the Ministers of God affirm my state to be good? And shall I thus dishonour God, and slight them?

Object.

But what saith the poor Soul to this? Must I eat mine own Words? Must I say and unsay? Say I have Grace, when before I said, I had none?

Answer.

Yes, and be thankful too to God that you may say so. Is it not bet-

ter for you to cross your own Flesh, than to cross God's Spirit? Take notice of this, and fear lest that proud and peevish Soul of yours (which now refuseth Consolation when God offers it) be forced to fare as a Man that eats his own Flesh, and so to come upon her Knees for Comfort, and get none to her dying Day. For though God will save you at last, yet (mean while) you shall have an Hell upon Earth before this be.

One would have thought it had been great Humility in Peter to refuse to let Christ wash his Feet; but it was no such matter. Indeed nothing less; therefore Christ takes him up roundly for it, (which is indeed the only way to cure such a Distemper as this) *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.* If you will needs have your own way, and humour your self, and will not be perswaded, you may go down to Hell in the mind. Peter might have paused here, and taken Breath, but did not: His stout Stomach quickly came down, and he presently said, *Then, Lord, not only my Feet, but my Hands, and Head, and all.* It is the Humility of a good Heart, to take what God offers. Most Christians think they are humble-

Joh. 13.
8, 9

humble-hearted, when yet they are so far proud, as to give way to this sul-
len Disposition. Therefore labour to
over-master this over-soaring Heart
of thine, with the Authority of the
Word of God ; and be sure to receive
Mercy while God offers it, lest he
draw in, and take away the Comfort
of his Spirit from thee, and make
thee go howling and roaring to thy
Grave. Tho' he bring thee to Hea-
ven in the end, yet thou may'st have
an uncomfortable Hell before thou
comest thither.

Rule 4.

So for the third Rule, the last fol-
loweth. The last Rule is this:
Maintain the good Work which thy
Heart hath submitted unto, and keep
it as the best thing in thy House, and
(of Treasure) the best under Heaven.
And then, when thou hast by it ob-
tained certain Evidence that thy E-
state is good ; hear nothing against it,
but stick fast to it, as to thy Life. Re-
gard nothing (what is not in the
Word) to the contrary of that Evi-
dence of thy Salvation ; that I mean,
which thou hast been perswaded of by
the Word of Truth. And here, if Sa-
tan or carnal Reason have any thing
to say against thee, let them bring
Scripture, and then yield to it in the
true

true sense; but without the Word hear nothing. Look as it is with a Man that is at Law for Lands; if he have his Adversary on the hip, and have gotten some Advantage against him, he will keep him there, and hold him to the Point. So do thou in a better case. For, if a Man will follow every wrangling Lawyer at every impertinent quillet or out-leap, he must never look for an end of lawing: And it is the fashion of many Attorneys, rather to breed Quarrels, than to kill them in the Conception. So in this case, he that will quarrel where he may resolve, shall never have done. And therefore hold to the main Point. Deal with Satan as with a subtil Adversary that is full of Wiles and Fetches. It is the cunning of the Enemy to lead you aside: And he will have many Vagaries, if you be in a good Way, to bring you out: But be sure to hold to that Truth which you have received from the evidence of the Word, and the witness of Conscience. When a Man hath gotten some Comfort, then the Devil begins to play the Lawyer in this or the like manner.

How

How the Soul being tempted, may answer Satan's Accusations.

Satan. Doest thou not see how weak and poor thou art? How destitute of all saving Grace, and how contrary thou walkest to God?

Sinner. It is true, (saith the Soul) yet it is as true, that he that confesseth and forsaketh his Sin shall find Mercy.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) doest thou not see that thou art full of Pride and Weakness, and secretly unwilling to come to Duties?

Sinner. It is true (saith the Soul) I am so, yet I hate, and desire to forsake this way, and therefore shall find Mercy; the Word saith so.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) are you of God's Counsel? Secret things belong to God.

Sinner. Indeed (saith the Soul) I know not what God's secret Will is; yet that I know, that the Word saith; which is, *He hath no Pleasure in the Death of a Sinner*, but invites such daily to come unto him.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) many covet themselves: Mercy is as a black Swan, a rare Bird; and few obtain it.

it : And why (then) may not you be cozened as well as others ?

But (saith the Soul) the Lord *Sinner.* will not cozen me, and the Lord knows my Heart ; and the Word knows what the Lord knows.

But (saith the Devil) may not *Satan.* you be deceived in the Letter of the Word ? The Word is true indeed ; but how know you that you rightly apply it, and that the Word and your Heart sute together ?

Why (saith the Soul) I desire as earnestly to have my Sin purged, as I do to have it pardoned. I know my Heart by the Word, and to the Word I repair ; and the Lord knows that I hate all Sin inwardly, and reform it outwardly, to my weak Power ; and therefore I know I shall find Mercy. Shew me a place of Scripture that saith I do not rightly apply the Word, and I believe it ; but I will not believe thee ; for thou art, as thou wast from the beginning, a Liar. Thus hold to the Word, and the Devil will be tired, weary, and leave thee ; keep you here, for if he catch you a wandering after sense and feeling, you are gone. The Prophet saith : *Thou through* Psal. 119.
thy Commandments hast made me 98.
wiser.

wiser than my Enemies; for they are ever with me. Satan is wise by long Experience; and the Flesh, and carnal Reason, and the World, are wise too: But blessed be our God that makes every poor ignorant Servant of his wiser than all these. But how? The Word must ever be in your Hands, and the Meditation of it in your Hearts: It must be always with you; and you must keep it with you daily: For that will make you not to know only what is amiss, but to get ground against Corruption, and whatsoever else may hinder your Peace with God and with your selves.

Satan deals in this case with the Soul, as the Enemies in War: When Josh. 8. 19. *Joshua* defeated the Men of *Ai*, he got them out of the City; and then they that lay in ambush went and took it, and burnt it with Fire. So the Devil doth. Our Castle or City is the Promises, the Word and Ordinances of God: Now if the Devil can but get you out of this Castle, he hath you where he would: If you will look after every Bird that flies, and listen after every Word of carnal Reason and Temptation that comes, you are gone: If he can get you from the Sure Hold of the Promise,

mise, he will entangle you in his Snare of Unbelief, and so prevail against you.

Little Children, if ye abide in God's 1 John 2.
Commandments, ye abide in God, 28.
saith the Apostle. As if he had said, Children, your Enemies are many, and great, and cunning, therefore keep home, and within the Walls of your Sure Hope, and then you are well, whatsoever Weather is up. It is the fashion of Parents, if their Children run abroad and catch a knock, to tell them that they are well enough served; you might have kept at home when you had warning. So Here.

The issue of the Point is this: Judge thy Soul by the Word, and look upon that sacred Piece in the Glass of it self: And here, let it bear witness for thee: And what the Word of God doth evidence to thee, that do thou maintain, and hear nothing against it. This is the way to receive constant Comfort, and the way to go on cheerfully in thy Christian course. Let Quarrels, Troubles and Temptations come, yet keep those within the Doors, and rest thy self upon the Riches of that Grace that is in Christ Jesus. Then you may be ever comforted, and go singing to Heaven,

Heaven, and merrily to your Graves, though you meet with never so many Temptations and Oppositions, crossing your way.

Now follow some means to obtain an Interest in the Promises.

It resteth that I shew you some means whereby a Man may so improve his time, that at last he may obtain this blessed Estate of being merry in the Lord. The means are four. But before I begin with them, you must first know that we may use the means, and yet find no means under Heaven to do it, except God strike the Stroke. You must therefore wait upon God, and the Spirit of God in the use of the means for this matter, by believing rightly to your assurance. For, so the Text saith, *To you it is given to believe*; it must be given therefore: And Faith is the free Gift of God. It is God then that must do it; who yet will not do it without us, being reasonable Men and Women in the power of willing. Again, the Lord affords us means, yet not to use them, and give him the slip. And here it is a good saying; Let the Lord do what he will,

will, and let us do what we should. We must not think when we have the means, that we can get Faith presently: For, as Paul saith, *The same Eph. 1.10. Power that raised up Jesus from the dead, must make us able to believe;* or else all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Ministers on Earth, and all the help that Men and Means can give us, will do us no good. Now the Means are of divers kinds: As, Hearing, and Prayer, and Sacraments, which are the Conduits from which God communicates Faith. But I let them pass, and fasten upon those which are needful for feeble Christians, to the bringing of them into this blessed Estate of rightly believing. And these are such as follow.

First, We must, as much as in us *1. Means.* lies, labour to pull away all those carnal outward Stays that the Soul leans upon, and all other like Succours, and whatsoever Contentment it is, which a poor Sinner doth betake himself to, as to his Refuge, for Relief and Help; that when all these are taken from us, we may be forced to go for Succour thither, where right Succour is to be had. It is a thing natural to us all, even from our first Parents, a desire to have the Staff in our

our own Hands, and to be able to supply our selves of all Necessaries, without being beholden to others, or to any.

Now therefore the way to make the Soul to lean upon Christ, is to pluck away all those deceiving Props. The last thing we fly unto, is the Promise; which if we could find good any where else than in Christ, we would never go to him for it. God hears last of us; and therefore here we should do with ourselves, as the Enemy doth with a City besieged, when he would make the Inhabitants, or those that keep it, to yield; the way he takes is to famish them, to cut off all Provision, and stop all Passages, so that none can come to relieve them; then they presently yield themselves to the Mercy of the Assailant: So it is with our Nature. And seeing it is so that we are still trusting to our own Strengths, and relying upon something of our own, the best way were to famish the Heart, by cutting off all the Means and Comforts whereby the same is succoured, and quieted; but not rightly in Christ. For when the Heart is thus famished, it will then seek out to a Saviour, and there be,

be, because there is no other thing or means otherwise to help it.

The poor Woman in the Gospel *Mat. 5. 26,* had spent all her Goods upon the *27.*

Physicians; and if she had had but a little means left, yea, but one Farthing token (for any thing I know, or doth appear) she would never have gone to Christ: But when all these failed, then she was forced to seek to Christ, that was ready and willing to do that for her, and more than she desired. Our Souls must have something to bear upon; and they cannot subsist without some under-props. Hereupon therefore, when all our carnal Hopes are taken from us, we stay (as we must needs) upon the Promise, because we have nothing else to rest upon. Yet it is not required (though I thus speak) that a Man should cast away all outward Comforts, such as God affords him for the interim here. Oh no: But only this; that (though he have much this way) yet that he labour to get his Heart to see and acknowledge the insufficiency and nothingness of them all, till he have the superlative Comfort, Christ, above all; and not to repose in them (having them) as some do, making them

them our whole Contentment, and sole Rest: For then they are but lying Vanities, and broken Staves, which will not only cozen us, but pierce us too, and that deeply.

And now when the Soul sees that these things cannot succour it, but lay it in worse case, a Man will then be content to have his Heart divorced from them. And here it is with the Soul as it was with Noah's Dove; when the Ark began to rest upon the Mountain of *Ararat*, Noah then sent out the Dove, but the Dove found no rest for the sole of his Foot. No question there were many dead Carcases to settle upon; but the Dove found no rest, till she came to the Ark again. So when a Man finds no rest in any thing the Creature affords, and can get no footing for the Soul there to stay it self upon, then it betakes it self to Cherish the Ark, and goes home to the Promise, and rests there, and expects from thence what is needful for it. As (therefore) in the Art of Swimming; he that will swim, must pluck his Feet from the bottom, and commit himself to the Stream to bear him up; So in this our purpose to Heaven, we must draw our Hearts from

from these vain things below, and these from them; and though we have Honour and Preferments, yet we must put no Confidence in them, but pluck our Affections, as it were Feet, from them, and learn by our believing to commit our selves wholly to the power of the Promise, and thence to receive Comfort, and permanent abiding.

Let not the Gods of this World, then, as Honour, and Profit, and Pleasures, deceive thee. Did the Pride of *Pharoah's* Heart deliver him? Did the Riches of the rich Man in Hell save him? Did *Herod's* Applause that he had do him any good? Did these Gods secure them? Nay, have they not left them in the lurch? Therefore let us take our Hearts off from these things, and (in comparison to those of our better Life) have a base esteem of them, and see so great a Vanity, and Emptiness, and Insufficiency in them all, that we may be forced to seek to Christ, and say as *David*, *Help, Lord; for vain is the Help of Man.* Labour we further to see the privy pranks of our own Hearts, and to hunt out all those mazes, and turnings, and windings of our subtle Souls: For here it is wonder-

wonderful to see how the Soul is ready to hang her Comforts upon every Hedge, and to shift and shak in every by-corner for them. Now when thou seest thy Heart thus seeking Comfort in vain helps, call it from them, and them pluck away, and up by the roots, and see the Emptiness of them: Then will thy Heart be fit and ready to make out to Christ. And this for the first Means.

Secondly, Therefore when this is done, there is in some part, some way made for the Promise to come into thy Soul; therefore labour thou in the second place, to have thy Heart possessed thorowly, and perswaded effectually of the fulness of that good which is in the Promise, and of that satisfactory Mercy and Freshness of the Grace that is in Christ, so that the Soul may be established with that full Content which is to be had in the Riches of the Promise. But mark what I say; let us perswade our Hearts first; and not content our selves that we are able to dispute somewhat fully of the Excellency of the Promise, and of those Riches in it, through the free Grace of God in Christ. For, what is it to purpose that the Heart knows this, and

knowing

knowing it, to be so fore-stall'd, that it can never come to the Promise. Therefore leave not thy Heart till it come to value the Promise by that that the Word speaketh of it in a true account. I say, Leave not thy Heart, till thou see the promise of Grace most beautiful in thine Eye, and that thy Heart may get some earnest touching the Goodness of God, and the Riches of his Grace towards thee by the same. And here bring thy Heart to know and see, that the Promise is better than all the Riches and Honours that thou canst have, or the World can bestow: For so we read, *They that know thee, will trust in thee, for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee.* If thou knowest and wilt believe this, this kind of Knowledge and Perswasion cannot but breed Confidence and Resolution, and (consequently) quiet the Heart. We dare trust a Friend whose Faithfulness we have tried; and we rest upon that which we know by the sure Card of Experience. The Promises of God are (all of them) as true as Gospel. Seek from one end of the Heaven to the other; turn all the Bible over, and see if ever any Man leaned on the Promise, and the

E

Lord

Psal. 119.

92.

Psal. 73. 26.

Lord did not perform what he had promised for the good of his Soul. *Except the Lord had been my Delight, I should have perished in my Troubles.* (saith David.) *My Flesh faileth, and my Heart also; but thou art the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.* But here lyes a great matter, a Work of marvellous difficulty and great necessity; and therefore, that thy Heart may sit down satisfied with the sufficiency of the Promise, I will propound three Rules how the Promise may be improved, and conduce to thy singular Benefit here and hereafter.

Rule I.

How to
improve
the Promi-
ses for our
Benefit.

For the first of these Rules: Labour daily to present thy Soul a greater good in the Promise, than thou canst see any where else. It is a Man's Skill, (and it should be his Endeavour) daily to dog his Heart, and to look what it is that the Heart desires most; and accordingly to present the greatest good unto it. And what may that be? Even that which hath more of Contentment in it, than any thing else in the World. And here, we should deal with our Hearts as Men will with a corrupt Justice, when he would have him to be on his side: There, the only way

way is to bribe him ; but though this be sinful in this case, yet it is good to bribe (as it were) the corrupt Heart with the Goodness of the Promise; that so the Heart may cleave to it, and long after it. Do Honours, or Riches, or the Applause of Men, or any earthly Pleasures, offer thee Content and Satisfaction? Then perswade thy Heart there is a greater worth in the Promise, than can be had in all them. For here is *an exceeding weight of Glory*: And he that hath it shall be made a *King*, and shall have that Glory that will *never fade*. Further, doth thy Heart hanker after earthly Joy and Mirth? Thou shalt find more Joy in the Promise, than in the cracking of these Thorns. Doth thy Heart hanker after Riches? Tell thy Heart that there are *unsearchable Riches in Christ*, and that through him, we have Title to all the Promises of this Life and a better. We know that he that offers most for the Bargain hath it: Therefore we should observe the goings out of our Hearts, and what offers are made to give them the best content, and with such to present them. This the Promise doth; and this with a greater good to God, than

in all things in the World beside.

Therefore, *Oh the height; and depth, and length, and breadth of the Love of Christ which passeth knowledge!*

The consideration of so much, should not only work a longing after Christ, and the Promise; but fill our Faces with shame and confusion, that ever we should set so light by such riches of Mercy, and walk unworthy of so great Salvation. Could we comprehend the unmeasurable dimensions of God's Love and Goodness revealed in his Word; O how would our Hearts be enflamed towards him! When the Sinner thinks thus with himself; I that have done all that I could against so good a God, that my Heart even bleeds to think of it, there was no Name under Heaven that I tore in pieces more, or so much, as God's Name; his *Wounds*, and *Life*, and *Heart-Blood*, I have rent and torn a thousand times. Nay, there was no Command in the World that my Soul so much despised, as the Command of the Lord Jesus. There was no Spirit which ever spake to me, which I so much resisted as the Spirit of the Almighty. Oh how many sweet Motions hath the Lord let into my Soul,

Soul, thereby to force me from my Courses so base, and Practices so sinful? By how many Mercies hath he allured me, by how many gracious Promises hath he invited me, by how much of his Goodness provoked me to forsake my Sins, and to turn unto him? But I have flown in the Face of his *Ministers*, and *blessed Spirit*, and rejected all terms of Reconciliation. If I had lain in a Dungeon, and been plagued with Torments all my Life-time, yea, though I could have had another World full of Misery to live in, I should count it infinite Mercy, so the Lord would pass by my sinful Miscarriages, and pardon these inward Insurrections.

But that God should send his dearest *Son* to love me, and that so incomparably, and so unconceivably, as that I could not possibly hate him so much, as he loved and affected me; that I could not so exceed in Unkindness towards him, as he hath exceeded in tender Kindness towards me; What a Love is this? What Unkindness for so great Love? Were it not righteous with God, never to speak Comfort more to thy Soul, that have so lightly esteemed his Promise, and sweet Word of Comfort? Had it not

been just with him now to sit at the catch, and, to take all this (as he well might) for an advantage against me? Was it not just that I, which lived in Sin, should have perished in my Sins? And as just that I who have so much loved Corruption, should have reaped the bitter Fruit of it long e'er this? But that the Lord should find an Enemy, and not slay him; nay, that he should give his beloved *Son* out of his own Bosom to save him, is a Love not to be expressed. Oh the *height* of this Mercy beyond all desire or thought! Oh the *breadth* of this Mercy, a breadth without any bounds! Oh the *length* of this Mercy, a length beyond all times! Oh the *depth* of this Mercy, a Profoundity beyond all expression!

Labour here (therefore) to have access to the Promise, and to bring thy Soul unto it. Here speak a good Word for it, and say, Stand off Profits, and Pleasures, and Preferments; room for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus speak, and set a peerless most excellent Price upon the Promise: And be sure of this (for it is a sure Rule) whatsoever the Soul doth account as best, that it will chuse, and leave all others

others for it. Therefore if the Soul could once out-bid the World, and out-shoot the Devil in his own Bow, and put by all those things which the Devil casts as rubs in its way of coming to the Promise; this labour would be a Work of great gain, and usher in the Promise it self. For example, as thus: When thou seest thy Heart look after Friends; let those Friends usher the way to think on the infinite Love and Favour of God in Christ, that Friend, as he calls himself: And when thy Heart would hunt after Wealth, let this usher a way to the Promise, and say, If the Heart find such content in Riches, what should it find in the Riches of God's Grace in Christ! And thus present a greater good from the Promise than any, from any thing else; and thou dealest safely and well for thy self. This for the first Rule.

The second Rule is; Labour to bring thy Heart to this, That all the things in the World without the Promise are nothing: And that if thou hadst all that the Earth can afford, and not it, thou hast gotten but the Wind, or that which will rather be a Curse unto thee than a Blessing: For, *Faith is the substance of* Heb. 11. 1. *things*

things hoped for. It gives a kind of being and subsistence to all. So that there is no subsistence in Honour or Riches, if they subsist not by Faith; and without Faith they are Cloggs and Snares to us, no Helpers; except Faith give them their Denomination, and a Blessing therewith, they are poor and empty things. Our Prayers, if they want Faith in the Promise, are Prayers of no substance; Words, and nothing else. On the other side, the most broken and chattering Prayers of a poor Soul, when a poor Creature, can scarce utter five Words with any sense; yet these (how weak soever) mingled with Faith, are a very powerful Prayer. So all your hearing, and my preaching, hangs upon Faith; otherwise they are but lost Labour, wanting that that gives a kind of being to whatsoever I speak, or you hear. This for the second Rule.

3.

The third Rule in this second of the Means, is this: Labour to acquaint thy Heart with that good, which the Promise promiseth: And this, before carnal Reason comes and possesses thy Heart. Remember here that the Promise is most sure, and will come when it shall be most seasonable,

ble, and best for thee, and when God sees it most fit; for then we shall most certainly have it. *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may receive Comfort and Mercy in time of need.* Not when we see it fit, but when God sees it fit and profitable. But this it is which carries away many. Sometimes they are a little affected with the excellency of the Riches of God's Grace in Christ, and seeing what great things the Lord hath done for their Soul, they say, O that I were such a one; and O that I might die the Death of the Righteous! But when it comes so to pass that they have not what presently they expect, then they cast away their Hope; and then the good Promise of GOD being out of request, the Devil presently steps in and wonderfully prevails with them; They say with the Prophet, *When the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall the Fruit be on the Vine, when the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and yield no Fruit, then will I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.* But where no Blossoms are, nor Fruits appear, there all Joy goes to ground. We do not consider that Comfort from the Promise, and from

Heb. 4. 16.

Heb. 3. 17.

the Lord Jesus is then most seasonable, when we have most need, and (consequently) may receive most good by it : For then may we be sure to have the Promise so to surprize our Heart, that it shall be possessed and made happy with the All-sufficiency of God. But we go not so far. This for the second Rule.

3. Means. In the third place, look for all the good which thou needest and canst desire from that Sufficiency which is in the Promise ; and do not think of thy self to add any good unto it, but go to it for all thy good : For, *there* are all the Cords of Mercy that must draw thee ; and *there* is that All-sufficiency that can supply thee, and therefore look for all from thence, but think to bring nothing thither ; nothing (I say) that can be of Power to enable thee to a Power of believing.

Object. And here, it is a weak Plea for a Man to say, I dare not look to the Promise, I cannot believe it ; for if I could (and O that I could) then I might expect some good Fruit from it.

Ans. To answer this, Thou shalt never believe upon these Terms ; for, thou must not first have Faith, and then

then go to the Promise, but must first go to the Promise for the Power of that Faith ; from it thou must receive power to believe. And therefore say with the Prophet, *O Lord, remember thy Word to thy Servant*, Psal. 119. *wherein thou hast caused me to trust*, 49.

When Men are enlarged in Love to a Man, and make fair Weather of Promises unto him ; this perswades him to trust unto them, and to rely upon them for good to come ; therefore he saith, I durst never so much as have thought of it, much less expected it, if you had not promised so much.

And even so here, the Promise of God (made to the Soul) makes the Soul to rest upon what is promised.

To expect Faith without a Promise, is as if a Man should expect a crop of Corn without Seed ; for the Promise is the immortal Seed of God's Word, whereby the Spirit breeds this Faith in the Hearts of all that are his. So Christ, *The Hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it shall live* : It is spoken of raising of a dead Man from the grave of Sin. First, There is the Voice of Christ to the Soul, before

Joh. 5. 25.

fore there can be an Eccho again of that Soul to Christ; and so the power of the Promise must first come to the Soul, and we must first hear the Voice of God in the Promise, before we can return an Eccho back again to the Lord: The Lord must say, *Come to me*, before the Soul can say, *I come, Lord*. Therefore when thou feelest much deadness, and dead unfitness of Heart in thee to the Promise, do not thou then leave, and give off, and say, Thus I am, and so it is with me, and so an end; but go to the Promise, and say, Whatsoever Frailties I find in myself, yet I will look to the Lord, and to his Promise; for if I want Faith, the Promise must settle me, and I must not bring Faith to the Promise, but receive Faith from it to believe; and therefore I will wait upon God till he please to work it. Thus for the third Rule.

4. *Means.*

And now in the last place; and lastly, labour to submit to the most equal condition of the Promise, not making more Conditions there than God hath made. Now the Promise requires no more of a Man, but that he come and lay hold on Mercy; therefore do thou require no more. There is enough in the Promise to do

do thee good; therefore do thou expect all good from it, and be content there to take of God whatsoever he hath therein offered to thy Faith. *Buy without Money*, saith the Prophet: This is the Condition that God offers Mercy upon, buy Wine and Milk, that is, Grace and Salvation, without Money, that is, without any Sufficiency of your own. If a Man should go running up and down to borrow Money before he comes to buy, he may famish before he can come: So the Lord offering Christ's Mercy and Salvation without our cost, and saying, Come, take it without Money; and yet we will run up and down to borrow Money of our *Prayers*, and other *Duties* also, and from our *Prayer against Corruption*, we may be starved spiritually before we can buy at that hand. If we go this way to work, we may quickly lose our Labour, and our selves. And therefore make God's Commodities no dearer than God himself makes them. Many a poor Soul, not remembring this, is kept from coming to the Promise: For, Oh, saith one, if I were able to master my Sins and Distempers as such a one can do, then I might with boldness believe.

Isa. 55.12.

Ezek. 16.
8, 9.

lieve. But this is to bring Money : But art thou not content to have Christ of free-cost, so as he may have thee, and rule in thee, and supply what is wanting to thee, and open thy Stores, and heal thy Corruptions ? Then why goest thou not to the Promise with an empty Heart, that the Lord may supply thee, and master all thy Risings, and make thee a clean Heart ? But that must come afterwards, as the Lord saith, *When I passed by thee, and saw thee in thy Blood, and behold the time was as the time of Love, and I spread my Skirt over thee, and covered thy Nakedness ; yea, I entered into a Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine, (that is, thou wast content that God should marry thee in all thy Rags) then I washed thee with Water, yea, I thoroughly washed away thy Blood from thee, and anointed thee with Oyl, I cloathed thee also with broidered Work.* Here we see, that Christ first marieth the Church to himself, and then gives Grace, and passeth over his Estate to his Spouse. And now were it not a wonderful great Folly, if some great King should make love to a poor Milk-maid, and she should put it off, and refuse the Match till she were a QUEEN ; where

where if she will match with the King, she may be sure to be made a Queen presently. But this comes after, and not before the Marriage. So we must not look for Sanctification the first day, nor till we come to the Lord in our Christian Vocation: For this is all the Lord requires of us, namely, to see our Sins, to be weary of them, to be content that the Lord Jesus shall reveal unto us what is amiss, and seal a Pardon for it, and take it away; and (further) give us his Grace to take down the old Building, and to set up a new one in us after his Image; for then the Lord will bring us to himself; and into the Wedding-Chamber; and then through his great Mercy, all our Corruption shall fall to the ground. And when the Lord hath brought thy unfaithful Heart to believe, then labour to husband this Grace well, and to improve it for thy best good, and live by it; it is a marvellous great shame to see those that are born to fair means, I mean the poor Saints of God that have a right and title to Grace and Christ, yet live at such an under-rate: I would have thee live above the World, though thou hast not

not a Coat to cover thee, nor a House to put thy Head in ; yet if thou hast Faith, thou art a rich Man ; therefore husband thy Estate well. It's a shame to see some live, and husband not that Estate they have ; they live as if they had it not, so full of Want, so full of Care, so full of Pride, so weak, and unable to master their Sins, whereas the fault is not in the power of Faith, nor the Promise, nor in the Lord ; for God doth not grudge his People of Comfort, but would have his People live chearfully, and have strong Consolations and mighty Assurance of his Love ; and therefore the Text saith, *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice.* And so, *Heb. 6. 18. God hath sworn, that by two immutable things, wherein it's impossible for God to lie, we might have strong Consolations :* Nay, the Lord rejoiceth in the Prosperity of his Servants, and therefore hath richly provided for you, that you may rejoice ; and in not so doing, we offer a great deal of wrong to the Lord and his Promises, and bring an ill report upon that Grace and Mercy of his : And we hereby also open the Mouths of the wicked, and make them say, Oh, the precise People talk

talk of quiet, and contentment, and joy in the Holy Ghost ! There is great talking of these things, but we could never see it yet. O Brethren, it's a great shame ; are the Riches and Revenues of Faith so great, that a Christian may live like a Man all his days ? Let all the Drunkards, and malicious Wretches against God, laugh and be merry ; yet they cannot see one of those days that a poor Saint can ; yea, though he lay in Prison all his Life long. *Mat. 17. 20. If a Man had but Faith as a grain of Mustard-seed, and shall say to this Mountain, Go hence, it shall be done.* Whether this be spoken of justifying Faith, or no, I will not now dispute ; but this I am sure of, *Resist the Devil, and he will fly from you* ; and you may trample under all your Lusts and Corruptions : This is the Life of Faith, and this Life we may live, this Life we ought to live. If a Tradesman have a fair Stock, and quick Returns, if he goes down the wind, and begin to decline and decay, every Man will say, He was left marvellous well, but either he knew not how to use it, wanting Skill, or else attended not on it, wanting Care : Another Man would have lived bravely upon half of

of that Means which he had : So there is never a poor Christian, which trades in a Christian Course, but he hath a fair Estate, and may live like a Man. One promise is enough to make a Man live comfortably all his days, though he were in never so much want : But if he be cast behind-hand and goes down the wind with Comfort and Joy ; and sinks because of his Pride, and Distempers, and Vexation ; the fault is not in the Estate, for the Lord left him very well ; he had a Child's Portion, had he had an Heart to fear God, and love him ; as *David* saith, *Oh be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love and fear thy Name.* The fault was not in the Promise, that they could not, nor in his Faith, that it would not help him. But he let the Promises lye by ; they came into the Table, but he never call them up, nor husbanded them aright. He had a world of Consolations, that would have given a Man Liberty in Prison, Honour in Shame and Disgrace, and Comfort in time of Distress ; but he did not husband them. And therefore he advised to do as the Tradesman doth ; he will not spend of his stock, but live of his trading ;

O I would have every Christian live of his Faith. Whatever Strength thou needest, fetch it from Grace in Christ; and whatever Comfort thou wantest, fetch it from Christ; but live by Faith, and make a good living of it too; and then thou hast improved the Promise aright: Bring but an empty believing Heart with thee, and the Oil will never fail, and the Meal in the Barrel will never decay, but continually supply thee, as it did that poor Widow.

Object. But how shall a Man be trained, that he get this Skill of living by Faith? Every Man hath his Shifts and Tricks, and lives by his own Devices; and the Devil hath enough of them in the World that live this Life, but the best Life of all is little look'd after?

Now for an answer, know thus much, That there are three Particulars for the training up the Heart to learn the Skill of living by Faith.

1. First, We must labour to get matter for our Faith to work upon.
2. We must labour to fit Faith for the Work.
3. We must labour to order our Faith aright in the Work.

First, We must provide matter for our

our Faith to work upon: For this we see ordinarily, if a Workman want matter to work upon, either a Carpenter, or the like, he must needs cease his Work, and he can go no further. And if a Man's work fails, how can he provide for his Family? This is the complaint of poor People now-a-days, that they have no Work: So it is in a Christian's course; many poor Christians that are newly set up, and are not aforehand in the World, they want even matter for their Faith; I mean, some are ignorant, and cannot read, and some have not means of a preaching-Ministry, others have but small Parts, and cannot hear, and little do they retain of what they do hear. The Promises of God, not understood, nor remembered, nor rightly applied, they live marvellously poor, when they might live very comfortably in the World.

Now the matter of our Faith, is the whole Word of God: As it is with the Bee in gathering Honey: As the Spider gathers Poyson out of every Flower, so the Bee gathers Honey out of the same Flower; and out of the sweetest Flower she sucks the most Honey. Oh the Word of God, how full of sweet Flowers is it!

There

There is the sharpest Terrors, and the fearfulest Plagues too : A gracious Heart will gather Sweetness out of both these. But above all, the sweet of the Promises of the Gospel, the sap and sweet therein, and the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that is communicated thereby ! Oh the faithful Soul sucks most there. Now that we may provide matter for our Faith, observe these Rules, which are commonly observed in all Provisions.

First, They provide and lay in, in season, timely, as soon as they can : This is the Practice of him that would husband his Estate wisely ; his care is to buy at the best hand : So I would have a good Christian to store up all the Promises of God, in all the good Word of God seasonably ; I mean, when all thy Parts and Abilities are strong, and Nature is able to fight it out ; and while the fair Day of God's Favour lasteth, and while the Word and Sacraments are dispensed, this is the best time to lay in Spiritual Provisions, that we may not want them, when we have use of them. It is a marvellous, strange, and preposterous course, when a Man is weak, his Eyes dim, and his Heart
and

and Strength faileth, and even ready to give up the Ghost, then to lay in Grace and Provision of Mercy : And then for him who hath hated the Ministers, and loathed the means of Grace, and abused the Patience and Long-suffering of God : Oh then to have a Minister come to him, and have a Promise in the Day of Persecution ; then for a Man to bethink himself of the Promise and Comforts of the Gospel ; when a Man should spend on the Promises, then to be getting of them, this is ill husbandry : The better way is this, to be buying and getting in at every turn : And this is the reason why our Saviour saith, *O if thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy Peace!* While the Word, and thy Life, and the Sabbaths, and the Ordinances last, this is thy day ; we know not how soon the Lord may take all from us. Oh the Estate of the poor *Palatinates*, if it be true we hear of them, they have lost all the means of Grace, and they have Idolatry now amongst them, and their Enemies force them to go to Mass against their Consciences ; and they cannot see a good Minister, nor a good Christian, but they weep to consider

ready consider the Times they once had:
 lay in Therefore let's labour to be wise in
 : And the Lord, now while the Fair is; and
 ed the consider how God deals with his
 eans of Children: *Psalm 48. 9. We have*
ce and thought of thy Name, O Lord, in the
hen to midst of the Temple. It is spoken
 n, and there of the Goodness of God to-
 persecu-wards *Sion*: A Cup of Poyson, and a
 k him Stone of Stumbling: When he had
 orts of spoken of all the Bulwarks that God
 l spend had made, and all the Goodness and
 getting Mercy he had shewed to his Peo-
 : The ple, and the Malice and Wrath of his
 g and Enemies, he saith, This God is our
 this is God, even for ever: As if he had said,
 ith, *O The Lord did provide for his Pec-*
y day, ple in Egypt, and overthrew proud
Peace! Pharoah that set himself against God;
 e, and and this is our God. When thou art
 nances in the Wilderness, this God is thy
 w not God; when thou art in Persecution,
 ke all this God is thy God, and the God of
 e poor all: Thus he stores up while the Sea-
 ear of son lasts.

2. Note this, as thou must ob-
 olatry serve what God doth to others, so
 Enc- about to treasure up thy own Expe-
 as a- riences. *1 Tim. 4. 18.* He hath de-
 they livered us, and he doth and will de-
 nor a liver us, saith the Apostle: And the
 ep to Prophet *David* saith, *I remember thy*
 nlider *Judg.*

Judgment of old. Oh well fare a good old store: I remember, saith he, how thou didst rebuke *Amaleck*, and overthrew *Nimrod*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *Achitophel*. Oh it's admirable to consider these things! I receive Comfort, saith he; God will overthrow every Enemy, and this is store for thy Faith to work upon, *Psal.* 89. 49. *Where are thy former Mercies* *David* is aforehand with God now he is not come to buy Food just at the time of Famine, but it's laid up beforehand; lay in abundantly of all the Promises of all kinds, you had better leave than lack; and it's the Wisdom of a Man to have somewhat to spare, and to have an overplus aforehand, that a Man may not live feebly and poorly, and be at his Wits end every turn, and knows not which way to shift for himself, and have no Bread in his House; I mean no provision of Promises by him. *Isa.* 42. 23. *Who is wise, let him buy for after-times*: As if he had said, You must not only lay in Promises for the present, but store them for afterwards; as the Chapman saith, I shall want this at such a time; and so the Husbandman saith, I shall have occasion for this or that at such a time.

time, and so get it aforehand. Oh that God would give us these Hearts! It is good, as we may so say, to keep Promises in pickle, that we may spend them at leisure. *In the days of Famine*, saith the Prophet, *thou shalt have enough*. These precious Promises will be good Meat in Lent, when haply thou shalt sit under a hollow Tree, and creep among the Bushes, then three or four of these Promises will give a Man a good Meal of Comfort; therefore store them up, they will do you no harm: And when you are driven from House, and Home, and Friends, and all these will exceedingly refresh. Oh how sweetly are they scattered up and down in the Word, according to the Saints several Necessities and Occasions. Bring this precious Provision home, leave it not in the Market; 'tis a folly to say, I have good Provision, but it is not here. *Let the Word of God dwell plenteously in you, and richly in all Wisdom*. Observe, it must be plenty, not scant; it must dwell in you, that you may but step aside and have it; there is the matter for your Faith to work on. So also in the next place, we are to fit Faith for the Service, that it may succeed

with more Comfort and better Speed. Though a Man be a Believer, yet there is a great deal of dulness and bluntness comes upon this Grace, though he have it: *Luke 24. 25.* See how our Saviour chides his Disciples, *Ob Fools, slow and dull of Heart to believe, &c.* So we ought to whet our Faith, that it may line and square the Promises (as it is in the Hebrew) that it may pierce through the veil of all the Riches of the freeness of God's Grace, and so bring Comfort to us: It's with the hand of Faith, as it is with the hand of the Body, if it be nummed, stiff, or frozen, a Man must rub it, or warm it, before he can hold any thing; so it is with the hand of Faith, for Faith is the hand of the Soul, it takes hold of that Mercy which God hath provided for us in Christ Jesus. Now Faith is sometimes numm'd and stiff through Carelessness and Looseness; therefore it's not enough for a Man to have Faith, but he must supply and oyl the Springs of Faith, that he may more freely take hold of the Promises of Life, and receive Comfort from thence; and that this may be done, we must first maintain the evidence of Faith once gotten; with questi-

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on undeniable, this Grace of Faith once gotten, is to be maintained: Mark it, I speak not of those that have not Faith; it is in vain to bid a Man live by Faith, who hath none: But it's for those in whose Hearts God hath been pleased to work this blessed Grace: This must be the care of those that have gotten Faith: He must know the nature of Faith in general, and of this Faith in particular, whether it be of that Faith which *Peter* speaks of; for there is a great deal of Copper-faith in this World: As, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners; and the like. Now when thou hast gained Evidence that thou hast Faith, then fill it up, and keep it by thee, and labour to make the Demonstration of it so plain to thy Soul, that it may be undeniable. What a great folly is it for a Man to question, when he should use it? The Work must needs be much hindered, though he have never so much Faith, when he begins to cavil with it, and to question whether it be good or no: It's a proverbial Speech. He that doubts of his way, misseth his way; for while he is doubting, he goes no way in conclusion: So he that questions whether

ther he hath Faith or no, gets little good at present by it. Tell a poor Sinner of living by Faith, and he says, it's good news if he had it. 'Tis poor comfort to bid a Man go warm him when he hath no Fire; so it's poor comfort to bid a Man live by that which he never had; quarrelling and doubting when a Man hath it, hinders the use and benefit of Faith. Here is a Man that is quarrelling about it, when he should live on it. When the Disciples saw Jesus walking on the Sea, they thought it was a Spirit, but Jesus said unto them, *Be of good comfort, it is I*: Now when Peter knew it was Christ, being somewhat too venturous, he said, *If it be thou, Lord, bid me come unto thee on the Water*; and Christ said, *Come*; and Peter going, the Water began to be boisterous, his Heart began to sink, &c. and Christ said unto him, *O thou of little Faith, why dost thou doubt?* As if he had said, it's now no time of doubting, but a time of believing: The Lord bid him come, and he had ground enough to come, and strength of Faith to come; but when he saw the Waves great and troublesom, instead of believing, he fell a questioning and quarrelling with

with the Promise : As it is with a
foul rusty Musquet, shoot such a one
off, and it will recoil. When Faith
grows rusty with doubting, we sit
down dismay'd and unsetled ; the
very questioning and quarrelling a-
gainst the Work of Faith, many
times doth as much disable a Man to
put forth the power of Faith, as if
he had no Faith at all.

Secondly, When thou hast main-
tained the clearness of the Work of
Grace before gained, then labour to
bring thy Heart to marvellous stil-
ness and calmness from time to time.
Stayedness and stilness of the Soul,
frames the Heart to hold the Shield
steadily, and bear off the Blow com-
fortably when it comes ; those boi-
stous Affections, those Crowds and
Troops of troublesom Imaginations,
as Fear and Jealousie ; these unrank
the frame of the Soul, that it is not
at the command of Faith ; as it is in
an Army, when Ranks and Files are
broken, they are at a rout ; be the
Commander never so skilful, he
cannot in that Condition march on :
So though we had never so victori-
ous a Faith, yet if the Soul were
hurled up and down with those boi-
stous Distempers, the Soul could

not command Faith. When it was told the Disciples, *Luke 24. 41.* that Christ was risen from the dead, and had manifested himself to them; the Text saith, *They believed not, and wondered*: They would not believe for a while, and it was through the Violence of their Joy, which made them they had no leisure to believe. As it's true of moderate Affection, so it's true of strong Fear, and Care, and Distempers, because these hurry the Soul violently, and transport it so, that he cannot believe: As it is in a Road, the Traveller is fitted to go his Journey, but he is hindred because the Crowd is so great and strong, that they cross him, and oppose him, and are ready to carry him another way against his Will; just so it is with a Soul thus troubled with tumultuous Thoughts, especially melancholy, and those other Enemies of the Soul, as vain Imaginations, sinful Fears, sinful Sorrow, distempered Thoughts and Cares; that though the Heart is willing and able to believe, yet those stirrings of boisterous Affections, they cross Faith in the way, and bear it down. There *David* chides his Heart in *Psalms 43. 5.* even rocks it asleep, and would bring it quiet, saying,
Why

*Why art thou so disquieted, O my Soul,
why art thou disquieted within me?*
There are things fit our purpose in
this Text.

1. That a tumultuous Distemper
of Heart makes a Man lye flat upon
his Back, and sink into a Swound.

2. It hinders the Work of Faith.
Mark what follows: Still trust in
God. As if he had said, Leave those
Distempers of Heart, and rest upon
the freeness of God's Grace.

3. *David* yet looks up to God for
Mercy: *For he is yet my God.* The
virtue of this Rule we find by Ex-
perience, especially in melancholy
Persons, when they have swarms of
Thoughts buzzing in their Minds;
sometimes restless Fears, that do
chase their Hearts, as the Hound
does the Deer in the Forrest, and after
this comes another Affection, and
after that another; and so at last they
come all together: Sometimes the
horror of a Man's Conscience makes
Hue and Cry after him, and makes
him say, Oh how my Heart smites
me! Methought I saw Hell gaping
for me, and the Devil even standing
at my Elbow, ready to carry me
down to everlasting Destruction:
This makes his Soul to have such an

amazement and gaslines of Spirit, that he cannot reach the Promise of God. Well, take the Lord's Advice by the Prophet: *Fear not, but stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord:* That is, lay aside those restless Imaginations, and those crowds of foolish Conceits; stand still, and be quiet, and with the Eye of Faith behold the Salvation of God.

A third Rule how Faith may be fitted for the Work: Take notice of this. In the want of any Means, do not *first* seek for them; and in the presence of any Means God affords, look not *first* to them for Succour and Supply, but *first* go to the Promise, that it may supply what you need, and that the Promise may bless what Means you have. It is an uncomfortable and disorderly course, for a Man barely and firstly to look at those things which are within the compass of Sense, and so range up and down in the use of the Means, when the Promise and Christ are the last thought of in our Hearts. As for instance: In a time of Poverty, how doth the Soul unfit it self for the Promise? When a Man sees his Estate low, and he is like to come to Misery, he saith, I have some good Friends

Friends that will not see me want, I have so much Means left yet, and I have my Health and Strength, and I hope to get a poor Living. Not one word all this while of a Promise: But what say you to this? If Death take away all thy Friends, Sicknes take away thy Health and Strength, Fire or Thieves take away all thy Goods, whither wilt thou now go? When then at a dead list, as we commonly say, he is fain to go to that Mercy which endureth for ever. Oh Friend, are you there now? Why came you not thither at first? Well, since thou art come, reason thus: I am like to be poor, and my Friends may die, and Thieves may rob me of all my Goods, but the Mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. So a Minister that is faithful, desires to preach fruitfully, and to the benefit of the Congregation; and then we catch at the helps that are near at hand, and we go to our Books and Studies, our Wits and Pains, and think these will do the deed. We do well in all this; but the fault is in the order of doing them. Haply God knocks off Man's Wheels, and a Man is not able to come to the bottom of the Point; and if he be able

to compass the truth in some measure, yet God blasts all he doth, and there is no good comes to the Souls of his People; at last he is fain to go to the Promise; and then the poor Minister saith, Lord, thou hast said thou wilt be with thy faithful Ministers *to the end of the World*: Little Strength there is in us; but be thou with us, Lord; now the Work goes on again. The Tradesman is honest and painful, and he hopes to compass a good Estate by his Calling, his Stock is good and great, and his Skill is sufficient, and his Penyworth shall be as reasonable as any others, and his Acquaintance are many: Then God blasts all these, and then he comes to the Promise, as in *Psal.* 1. 3. *Whatsoever the Righteous doth, it shall prosper.* Hold here now, and say, I expect all from the Promise, Mercy and Succour from the Promise. This was the course that *Jacob* took, *Gen.* 32. 9. first he wrestled with God, and overcame him, then he wrestled with his Brother *Esau*, and saith, *O God of my Father Abraham, and God of my Father Isaac, which saidst unto me, Return into thine own Country, and I will do thee good; I am not worthy the least of all thy*

thy Mercies: Lord, deliver me from the hand of my Brother Esau, for I fear him. Thus he wrestled with the Lord by virtue of a Promise, overcame him, and then overcame his Brother Esau, Heb. 13. 4, 5. Marriage is honourable among all Men, and the Bed undefiled: but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge. But how will you have help against this Covetousness? A Man would have said thus: You have got a good Portion, and but little Charge, and many Friends: But this counsele God takes; for he saith, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* And thus when I have chased away Doubting, then Faith is ready, and the Shield is scoured.

Now for the ordering of Faith in the Work, there are two things to be attended to.

1. How the Soul should get to the Promises.

2. How the Soul should take, receive and improve this Sufficiency and Excellency that is in God.

1. How the Soul should get to the Promise: You see all is ready, the Way open, and Faith is fitted. There are three Rules to be observed, how the Soul may get to the Promise.

1. Throw off all Power and Ability

lity in thy self. Nevertheless, saith the Apostle, *I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* : It is not I that live by any power of my self, but Christ liveth in me. It was Christ's quickning, reviving and enabling, though he had Faith. *I know*, saith the Prophet, *Jer. 10. 23. that the way of Man is not in himself, neither is it in Man to direct his own Steps.* So do thou say, if ever thou wouldst have thy Heart fitted to go to the Promise, say, It is not here, Lord, it is not in this vain Mind, it is not in the Power of this dead Heart, or any Passage that ever I received, whereby I am able to believe in thee. I mean the Principle of Life is not here, the Root of Faith is in the Promise, and from thence it comes into the Soul, As it is with a Mariner, when the Ship is upon the Ground in the Ebb and Low Water, he doth not expect to tug his Ship to the Shore by any power of himself : So it is not in my Wisdom that can direct me, and it is not in my Weapon that can defend ; it is not this Humility that can bring my Soul down : It is not here, it is not I, Lord, that can rest, or go to a Promise ; even all our Abilities are at a low ebb : All that we
are,

are, or can do, is to empty our selves, and fit our selves, and get up the Main-Mast; that is, let the Soul be ready for a Promise, and by virtue of that be carried Heaven-ward, and Christ-ward. Take notice of this in your own Souls, that the Heart would begin at home: If a Temptation come, the Heart of it self would overcome it; and if a Duty to be done, the Heart of it self would perform it: And if Opposition come, the Heart of it self would resist it. O remember that a Man offers an Injury against Reason, Sense, and Religion, and all. Now thy Faith begins to wrestle with him and his dealing; and Conscience checks, and thou wilt tear thy own Heart out of thine own Bosom. Brethren, this will not do it: When a Ship of an hundred Tun is upon Ground, the Mariners may pull and tug their Hearts out e're they make her go. Oh go then and say, It is not I that can be patient, and put up a Wrong, be quiet, expect it not from hence. Let the Heart lye still, till the Wind, and Tide, and Promise come, and that will carry thee.

The Second Rule. Bring the Promise home to thy Heart, that the Promise may bring thy Heart to it.
And

And thus I would have you reason: The Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit, is in the Promise undeniably, and undoubtedly, and unspeakably accompanying in his manner, as he shall see fit. This I say, That the Almighty Power of Christ doth really and continually accompany the Promise for the good of his: Hence it is called, *The Spirit of Promise*; for there is an Almighty Creating Work goes along with the Promise. And I reason thus: That Word that discerns the Thoughts of the Hearts of Men, that Word must needs have the Almighty Work of God's Spirit accompanying of it: So far as God hath promised it, not when thou haply think'st it fit, but when God sees it fit. He doth it as a voluntary Workman, therefore thou considerest that there is an Almighty Power, and a Fulness in the Promise. Then lay that Promise upon thy own Heart, and conclude it, and look for Vertue from thence, to draw thy Soul to it again.

I have several Passages to express this more fully. *Jacob* would not believe that *Joseph* was alive, or if he were alive, he had but little Means, and was Poor, *Gen. 45. 26,*

27, 28, 29. But when he saw the Chariots that Joseph had sent him, then he believed and said, I have enough; Joseph my Son liveth. The Chariots sent from Joseph to Jacob, brought Jacob to Joseph. So every believing Soul is poor and feeble, and disabled to go to God, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: Therefore look thou unto the Chariots of Israel first, and that will convey thee to the Promise: As it is with the Miller, first he pares the Mill fitly, and orders all the occasions thereof, and when the Stones are fit, and laid to go, yet it will not, till the Sluce be pulled up, and the Water run that drives the Mill: So the Soul is humbled, and lyes level with the Lord and his Truth, and is content to yield to his Conditions; but now the Soul of it self, in it self cannot go, it hath not the Principle of going; but let down the Sluce of the Promise, and let that come to thy Heart, and it will bring thy Soul home to the Lord; as Luke 19. 9. *This Day Salvation is come to thy House: Not to the Walls of thy House, but to Men that are in thy House. They did not come to Salvation, but Salvation came to them. The Lord sent Salvation to salute the House of little Zachary.*

The

The Third Rule. When the Promise is thus come home to thee, and thou seest the Sufficiency and Authority of it, then all thou hast to do is this; in the stream of that Promise, be carried home to the Promise. The Prodigal; *Luke 15.* is said to be like a *lost Sheep*. (Mark this, for it concerns you, poor Creatures.) The poor Sheep is wandring up and down, now in the Mouth of the Lion, and then in the Briars, and sometimes in the Pit. The Text saith, *He leaveth ninety nine to seek that*: That is, in comparison of what care he expresth to the lost Sheep; he leaveth a Man regenerate not carelessly, but he will not expresse so great Love as to poor lost Man: And tho' thou canst not find the way to Heaven, yet he will find it thee; lye thou upon the Shoulders of Christ. When thou findest thy Heart feeble and weak, and thy self unable to believe, then the Lord Jesus Christ brings the Spirit of Grace, and that comes to seek, and Jesus Christ lays that Soul of thine upon his Shoulders, that is, upon the Riches of the freeness of his Grace: Therefore let thy Heart be transported by the power of that Grace, and by the virtue of that Mer-

cy that God hath made known to thee for thy everlasting good. When the Chariots are come, get up into them. The Lord Jesus Christ is gone up to Heaven, and hath sent these Chariots for thee; therefore get thee up, and say, Lord, take me up with thee. When the Mariner hath Sea-room enough, he cares for no Man, if he can but observe the Channel; he looks not so much at his Oar, or any thing, so that he can but observe the Channel. This Channel is the full Tide of Promise; therefore lay thy self upon the Promise, and say, Lord, in the virtue of that Grace, and in the power of that Spirit, carry me; and in the Riches of that Mercy of thine, Lord, convey the Heart of this poor Sinner, and make me happy with thy self for ever.

Again, Never let a quick Stock lye dead by you; it's monstrous ill husbandry not to be trading with a quick Stock. As it is in the World with Temporals, even so it is in our Spiritual Estate. Though a Man have little for the present, yet if he have some old Reversions to come, it will refresh his Heart, and bear him up in time of Poverty and Misery; and he saith, If he can make but a scrambling

bling shift for a while, for so long time, then he hopes to live as well as any Man in the Country : So there is some of the Promises we have in Possession. Oh, but there is the Reversion of old Promises, old Rents. As old Rents of Farms that were Let long ago, when the Leases come out, they are worth treble the Rent they were Let for at the first : So there are old Rents of Comfort and Mercy ; as, *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.* Then no more Tears, no more Trouble, no more Sorrow, no more Sin. Oh get those into your Hands, and have them in use, and say, The Day will come when we shall have Happiness and Joy beyond all that the Tongue of Man can express, or the Heart conceive. Though we are buffeted with many Temptations, and wearied with a World of Corruptions, yet we shall be saved, saith Faith. Thus a Man may make a pretty good shift to live upon these terms, though we have nothing else to live upon in the World. Remember what I spake now, and labour to fasten this Truth upon thy Heart, That there is not only present good in thy self, but in another, and reserved by another for

for thy Comfort, and be thou content it should be so ; not only to look what thou hast, but consider that the greatest part of thy Glory, is in the Glory of Christ ; and the greatest part of thy Wisdom, is in the Wisdom of Christ ; and the greatest part of thy Liberty, in the Liberty of a Christ ; and thy Riches, in the Riches of a Christ. And know, whatever is in Christ thou hast it all as thine. *John 3. 12. Behold what Love the Father hath shewed to us, that we are now the Sons of God !* I tell you, Brethren, this is a marvellous Privilege ; and if you had no more but this, you had a Child's Portion ; but it appears not what we shall have, we have but a glimpse now : What think you will the Harvest be ? Now we have but the tips of it, what shall then the full Cups be, when we shall see Christ as he is ? Thus did Moses improve his Estate, *Heb. 11. 26.* He bore all Afflictions comfortably ; yea, He esteemed the Rebukes of Christ as greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt ; Why ? because he had an Eye to the Recompence of the Reward. We account not of a Man's Estate for what he hath in present Possession ; but what is like to befall him, and what he

he is born unto. What *Moses* did do thou: Remember thou hast a good Stock upon the Ground, which will pay all thy Debt, and yet live like a Man too. Though thou hast many Corruptions, many Disgraces cast upon thee; though thou hast little Strength, and art at a great loss in point of Comfort; yet there is enough in Heaven, enough in Christ, both of Riches and Comfort. Let thy Soul then be careful to make all these present with thee for thine own good.

But some will say, How may a Man expect that from the Promise which God intends, and will undoubtedly bestow?

For answer hereunto, I will shew what thou may'st expect, and what God will undoubtedly bestow. If thou dost believe, Heaven and Salvation are certainly thine, and Perseverance to the end, and that manner and measure of Assistance, that may make thee fit for Perseverance: These three things grow here. But for Temporal Blessings which we desire, and that measure of Spiritual Blessings which we must have, so much Grace, and so much Assistance, and so much Abilities to do Duties;

Duties; God doth not engage himself to bestow these. But that which God engageth himself to bestow, both for Temporal and Spiritual Blessings, it may be discovered in these three Particulars. So much Grace and Assurance of God's Love, and so much Comfort in Grace as he sees fit for thee after his own order, and in his own time. I will open them all, because many do here bungle wonderfully.

First, He will bestow them in his own order, not thy order. First, He will make thee fit, and make thee good, that thou may'st be able to digest them, and then he will bestow them on thee. Haply a poor Man is driven to desperate hazard, and is brought miserably under, and therefore the Heart cries earnestly for some more supply; and he calls, and God answers not; and he labours to look up to the Promise, where God saith, *Nothing shall be wanting to him*, and yet it cometh not. I say, God will give these in his own order. First, God will make thee fit for this Estate, and then give it. I never knew a good Man desperately poor, but his Heart is desperately proud; therefore the Lord will make him good, and make

make his proud Heart yield, and then bestow these things: Look for that first; and then for the other.

Again, Another Christian labours exceedingly for the Assurance of God's Love, and cannot obtain it; and seeks to God in the use of the Promises, and yet he cannot find it settled. Well, God will give thee Comfort and Consolation, but in his own time. And know this, that commonly the Lord never debarrs the Soul of Comfort, but he sees the Heart is not fit for it. Thy Heart would be proud and careless, and God would hear no more of thee, and thy Sail would overturn the Boat; therefore when God hath abased thy Heart, and made thee content to want what he shall deny, then he will give thee Assurance, but it must be in his order. And this is the reason why the most smoak out their Days in Discontent: the reason is, There is a proud Heart, and a sturdy Disposition of Spirit that will not come unto God's terms. As it is with a Physician; he will not give a Cordial to his Patient, when he will: For if he were in a burning Fever, it were the next way to send him going; but first he purges him, and makes him fit, and then gives him

him a Cordial: So it is in these things which thou cravest, the Lord will give thee them, when thou shalt not surfeit of Comfort, and Assurance, and Prosperity; and when thy Heart is emptied and purged, and able to digest these things, then the Lord will give them.

Secondly, The Lord will give us Temporal Blessings, and that measure of Spiritual, in his own due time; not when thou and I would, but when he sees most fit; as *John 2-3, 4*. The Mother of Jesus comes to our Saviour, and saith, *They have no Wine*. She thought she had Christ at command: But he answers her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine Hour is not yet come*. So it is with our Souls; we want Comfort, and we want Strength against our Corruptions, and Assurance, and Assistance: But what have I to do with that proud Heart, says our Saviour? *My time is not yet come*. You would have it now, as they said, *Wilt thou now restore the Kingdom to Israel?* God will do in his own time, and we must wait his leisure. This is one thing that doth necessarily accompany the Covenant of Grace, as I have shewed before. That the Lord should

should dispence of his Kingdom when he pleaseth, and not when we will. When the Lord sees these Blessings of Spiritual Mercies and Temporal Favours are ripe, and most seasonable to thy necessity, then thou shalt have them: But the time is in God's Hand.

Thirdly, The Lord doth not promise in such a manner and measure, and such a peculiar thing, to give that Temporal Blessing, and that Spiritual Assistance we desire; but the Lord will do that which he knows most fit: For so the Text says, *Feed me with Food convenient for me.* There was Faith now; he wholly refers himself to God. When a Man comes to the Taylor to have a Garment made, he doth not cut out the Garment himself, but refers it to the Judgment of the Workman. So must we do, refer our selves to God, and know, God promiseth nothing, but as he sees it fit for thy good. It may be thou shalt not have this Blessing, or that Grace. As it is with a Potter, he is minded to make so many Vessels of Honour: So if the Lord will make thee a Vessel of Honour, go away contented; whether thou hast so much Prosperity, and so much Good,

Good, or no, and so much Grace, it skills not; it is enough that thou art elected to eternal Happines.

Now you see how to manage and improve the Promise aright for your best Advantage, and to expect that from the Promise which it will yield.

Again, Another Particular in this third Rule of living by Faith, is this: How to take, and how to enjoy the sap and sweet of the Promise, and to live by it. When the Husbandman hath sown his Ground, and his Fruit is ripe, and he hath reaped it, then he must gather in his Corn that he may live upon it. So let us gather in the Promises when we see the best Advantage; now let us take the Gain, and live by it, and that comfortable too, in the proof of God's Goodness therein. For this end, let me suggest these five Directions.

First, Thou seest what God is in the Promise; and thou expectest no more than God is there. Then eye that particular good in the Promise which thou standest in need of; eye that good in Christ; and in the Promise, and then set God's Power and Faithfulness a-work to bring that Good, and his Wisdom to continue it.

it. As for instance: I am in Persecution, and either I would have Deliverance and Safety, that I might not be imprisoned, or else Comfort and Refreshment, if the Lord carry me thither; and therefore I would see all this in the Promise, still reserving the Conditions beforementioned. If thou art in Prison, eye Liberty and Preservation in Christ; he that is the great Deliverer of his People, and carrieth his People in his own Hands: And then set God's Power and Faithfulness a-work, that can do it; and his Wisdom, that can continue it for thy good. That which thou seekest and needest in the Promise, that the Power and Wisdom of God may communicate to thy Soul. This is the meaning of that place, *Psalm 37. 3. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* Root thy self, and lay all thy Occasions upon the Lord: Therefore the Apostle saith, *1 Pet. 5. 7. Cast your Care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.* It is God's proper Office and Work: He careth for thy Soul, therefore lay it all upon him, and put over all thy Care into his Hands, and set his Power and Faithfulness a-work; only this is here a little

little to be scanned. I speak not this, that we should take no care at all, but I say, Hang all the weight and burden upon the Lord. The Brewer he tumbles the Barrel of Beer, and he rous it, but it's the Earth that bears it: So whatever Trouble is in thine Eye, or Ear, or Heart, rous it upon the Lord. That is thus: The weight of a Man lyes especially in three things, which a Man must hurl off himself, and lay upon the Lord. Either a Man shall not be able to know what he shall do, or what he is commanded: Or else, Secondly, He shall not be able to do what God commands, and he knows: Or else, Thirdly, He shall not find success in what he doth. It is not a trouble to do what we can, or to employ our selves as we are able: But this is the trouble, when the Heart saith, I know not what the Mind of God is; or, I shall not do what I know; or, it will not succeed: Or, no, it is not in my power. Now leave all these with God, and meddle not with them, but put them over to the Lord, and meddle with thine own Duty, and with thine own Work; and let God alone with his: And say thou unto the Lord, In truth, Lord,

it is not in my power, it is not in my parts or work, either to compass that Wisdom, that is able to direct my self, or to have any power to do all that is commanded, much less to give good success. Lord, I will not meddle with that, but leave it to thy Majesty: If thou in thy Power canst not, nor in thy Faithfulness and Goodness carest not for thy poor helpless Creature, then I am content: And if thou wilt not be faithful, then I am content to be miserable.

And so also thou mayest suppose a Man that hath promised to undertake some Business for a Friend, and in the end it proves somewhat troublesome, and therefore he wishes his Friend to take it again into his own hands; for it is very troublesome: But a Man will leave it to him, and say, He hath engaged himself to do it, and he will not look after it; I will not meddle with it any more. So what end it is that is in God's Royal Prerogative, leave it with God, and do not meddle with it; let God now look to it; leave it to his Faithfulness, and Power to accomplish it: So did *Abraham*, *Rom. 14. 18, 19, 20*. *Abraham above Hope believed under Hope,*

Hope, that he should be the Father of many Nations. Sarah's Womb was barren, and his Body dead, and yet he must have a Son: And therefore he set God's Power a-work, and saith, ver. 21. Lord, this Body is dead, and Sarah is barren: There is no help here: But thou art able, and thou hast engaged thy self to do it. You see he sets God's Power to work, and puts over all the weight and burthen of the Care upon the Lord. And therefore says Mordecai, Esther 4. 14. *If thou bold thy Peace at this time, Comfort and Deliverance shall come from some other place.* He was resolved that God had Deliverance for his Church, and would not deny his Truth. *Salvation will come,* saith the Text. He knows not the place or the means: But he knows *Salvation will come.* So set thou God's Power and Faithfulness to work, and not thy own Care: Commit it to the Lord, and cast thy Care upon him, so far as concerns the burthen of it. This is the first Direction.

Secondly, By Faith go to the Promise again for Help and Power to wait on God in that way, and to look towards God in the use of those means that he hath appointed for

the attaining of that Good which his Power will work for thee: God will certainly work it: And so thou must meet God in the course of his Providence, in the improvement of the Means he hath appointed for thy good. Observe thou this Providence, and do thou what God requires: For otherwise we live not by Faith, but tempt God, and throw away the Promise and all, and deprive our selves of that good which God would bestow; we not walking in that way which he hath appointed. *Luke 24. 49.* when our Saviour was to go to Heaven, he said, *Behold I send the Promise of my Father amongst you: but tarry you in the City of Jerusalem until you be indued with Power from above.* Christ would indue them with the Spirit; but they must tarry at *Jerusalem*, and wait for it. So I say, Would'st thou have Grace, and the Spirit from above, and the Wealth of the World? Then walk in that way God hath appointed: Stay at *Jerusalem*, and be in the way, and meet God in his Providence, and then thou shalt receive from his Power and Faithfulness what thou needest. Thou wouldst have God bless thee in thine Estate, and yet thou

thou wouldst be idle and careless: But this will not do the deed: God would give thee a Blessing, but thou art not there to take it. This is the Excellency of the Promises of God; as they require Conditions before they bestow Mercies; so they make us able to be partakers of the Conditions, and give the Conditions: As for Example, Ezek. 36. the Lord in the former part of the Chapter promisseth to give them many things; but how? It must be by Prayer, and humbling themselves before him: He will give thee a Family-Blessing, by Prayer in it; and a Blessing in private, by Prayer in private; and Strength against Sin, and Power against Corruption: But I will be sought unto for all these, saith the Lord: And the Text saith, *Blessed is the Man that walketh in his Integrity, and his Children after him.* Therefore walk thou in the Integrity of thine Heart; that's the Condition of a Christian in general; or as a Husband, or as a Wife, or as a Servant, in the particular. This the Promise requires. But mark this now: The same Promise that requireth the Conditions, will help us to perform the Conditions: And the same Lord that saith, I will.

A Christian

Mentis

will be entreated and sought to for all these; the same Lord saith, Psal. 10. 17. *He prepareth their Hearts to pray.* Go thou therefore to God to help thee to pray, that he may bestow his Blessing upon thee, which he hath promised, Ezek. 26. 27. He will first give them a new Heart, then teach them to walk in his ways. So if thou wilt walk in his Ways, thou shalt have his Blessings: Therefore go thou by the power of Faith, to the Promises of God, for Strength and Grace, and in that thou must use the Means appointed, and then expect a Blessing from it in the Course of his Providence. Now is God's Power and Faithfulness set a-work.

The third Direction. We must set it down, and conclude it, that God will do it; so shall we receive in the Ways of his Providence whatsoever he hath promised to give. That is the Work of Faith, and that is to draw Sap and Virtue from the Promise, *John 3. 33.* There by sealing is meant sealing to the Promise. This is the nature of sealing; when a Man hath drawn the Articles of Agreement, and when they have sealed, the whole matter is done. So Faith must make the Promise Authentic,

tical, and put a Seal to it that it is true, and faith, It is done in Heaven, and I am fully resolved, and settledly perswaded thereof, that I shall have whatever I have believed, and thou hast promised, and I have used means in the Ways of thy Providence. Famous is that of *Abraham*, Gen. 22. 5. The Lord hath bidden him sacrifice his Son, and yet had said before he should live: And therefore when he came to the place, he said to his Servants, *Abide you here with the Asses; for I and the Child will go yonder and sacrifice, and return again to you.* He thought to sacrifice him, and yet by Faith he believed that he should bring *Isaac* again. So I would have a poor Saint of God believe and conclude. When thou findest thy Comforts like *Isaac's* in the Ashes, and thy Estate helpless and hopeless, yet even then set God's Power a-work, and wait upon him in the use of the means that he hath appointed, and there conclude it, and bring Patience, Power, and Deliverance, and so in every kind, according to all thy Necessities. Yet remember this, Expect no more from the Promise, than God will give in the Promise; But say, My sins shall be mastered.

ed one day, and these Temptations shall one day be overthrown, that have so long annoyed the Soul of thy Servant : I have begg'd Succour against these Corruptions within, and these Temptations without, and yet it is not ; but I know it's done in Heaven ; it wants nothing but the taking out ; thou wilt bestow upon thy Servant what thou see'st fit, 1 Sam. i. 18. *Hannah* wept fore, and prayed to the Lord, and went away, and was no more sorrowful : And she said, Lord, I believe that I shall either have a Child, or that which is as good, or better : Now the Business was done. But imagine the Lord delays, and does not suddenly accomplish what he intends, and thou hast used means to receive ; he gives not, grants not, nor sends not Succour according to thy desire, and the tenure of the Covenant, as thou conceivest.

Then in the fourth place, Faith is to take up its stand, and stay till it come : As thou resolv'st so it will be : Stay till it be, and stay it out. Here is much Work to do. We prevent God's Kindness, when we go away before he be willing to bestow a Kindness on us : But Faith will not do.

do so: He that believes, does not make haste: He makes haste to obey, but he stays, and resolves that it will be. *The Vision is for an appointed time*, therefore wait for it. Thou art pestered with thy Sins, and hast laboured by Faith to subdue them; and thy Estate is low, and thou hast laboured by Faith for Deliverance: And yet it comes not: Therefore stay till God sees fit, and it will come, *Psal. 123. 2. As the Eyes of a Servant look to the hands of his Master, and the Eyes of a Maiden to her Mistress: So our Eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have Mercy upon us.* It is not, till I will, or till I see fit, or according to my Mind: But until the Lord have Mercy. We suddenly slide away from the Covenant which the Lord makes with us: Because we have it not when we will, therefore we go away, *1 Sam. 13. 13.* When Samuel tarried long, and the People began to murmur, Saul went and offered a Burnt-offering to the Lord: And therefore Samuel said unto him, *Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the Commandment of thy God, which he commanded thee: For now would the Lord have established the Kingdom upon Israel for ever.* If Saul had stayed

stayed the Lord's time, he would
 have established the Kingdom upon
 Israel for ever: But he prevented the
 Lord's Kindness, and offered Sacri-
 fice unseasonably and sinfully. So it
 is many times with a proud, pettish,
 rash and distempered Heart: If we
 have not what we would, and when
 we would, then we are all amott,
 and murmur, and say, Why should
 we wait any longer? Thou hast
 done foolishly. Hast thou prayed
 and looked to the Promise thus long,
 and wilt thou now give over? The
 Lord would have comforted thee,
 hadst thou gone on: But the Lord
 hath withdrawn himself from thee,
 because thou hast withdrawn thy
 Heart from the Promise. When the
 Carriage is heavy, and the Way dead,
 there are many sore pulls, and oft the
 Waggon is at a stand; and if a Man
 should then go away and give over,
 all his Work were lost. Therefore stay
 thou till the Lord shew Mercy. Thus
 long thou hast call'd, and sought, and
 lookt unto the Promise, and waited
 upon the Lord, and attended upon
 the freeness of his Grace, once more
 heiply would have done it: Thy Heart
 was almost humbled, thy Sin was
 almost conquered: Oh thou silly
 boyest Soul,

Soul, why didst not thou hold it out? It would have come at the last, my Life for thine. Now take heed of this; if the time seem tedious, and thy Heart begins to link, and thy Spirit is weary; take heed of flying off, take heed of shifting for thy own Comfort, and looking to base Ends and Aims: No, hold thy Mind to, and keep thy Eye of Faith upon the Promise, and stay it out till God see the time fit: And know, it's the best time, when it's God's time. In the 17th of the Acts, ver. 31, *Paul* says, *Except these abide in the Ship, these cannot be safe.* Every Man was skipping over-board to save himself: But *Paul* stayed them. A Man would have thought otherwise; but the Apostle knew it was not so; for the Lord had revealed it to him. So I say, Be thy Temptations never so strong, and thy Sins never so many, and thou beginnest to complain, and sayest, I have cryed, Lord, and fought earnestly, and yet my Condition is worse, and my Soul more sinful; and *Paul* is able to help my fall, there is no more Succour to be expected. Now take heed of going out of the Ship, and from the use of Means. Keep in the Ship, for in it you shall be

be safe. Keep in the Promise, and still your Hearts there : You shall have a happy arrival at Heaven, though it be upon a little broken Board : It's no matter, stay God's time.

The fifth Direction. Yet haply the Lord seems sometimes not only to delay his poor Servants, and to withhold his Favour ; but he seems to frown and say he will not hear ; and he seems to be angry with the Prayer of his Servants, and with their Importunity ; and he seems as if he would not succour and supply. Thus he dealt with *Jacob*, *Gen. 32. 26.* there the Lord says, *Let me go ; I care not what becomes of thee, Let me go.* But *Jacob* lays hold upon him, and would not let him go. So the last Work of Faith is this, In a holy Humility labour to contend with God, and by strong hand overcome the Lord ; for the Lord loves to be overcome thus. Be not saucy with the Lord ; and in the sense of thine own Baseness, as it were, catch the Lord Jesus, and strive with him ; leave not till thou hast those Comforts he hath promised, and thou hast begged. This is the Glory and Victory of the Triumph of Faith, that gives thee the day too and lays down the Weapons and

and yields himself conquered : As it was with Jacob, when God saw he could not prevail, he said, *vers. 28. Thy Name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, because thou hast prevailed with God.* God is ready to give what he hath promised : But he will have us try the mastery with him. God overcomes himself, and we by Faith in God overcome God : As *James 2. 13. Mercy triumphs over Justice.* Lord, saith my Soul, Why should not I have that Mercy, Supply and Succour ? Saith Justice, Thou art a sinful Wretch, and thou hast wronged me. Saith Anger, Thou hast deserved to be plagued : And therefore thou shalt feel the smart of my Displeasure. Now Faith lays hold upon the Riches of the freeness of God's Mercy in Christ, and in him Justice is satisfied, and Anger appeased for all ; and now Mercy is purchased for all, and Mercy triumpheth over Justice, and Faith takes hold upon and overcomes God himself, as I may say, with a holy humble baseness of Heart. You know what the Lord did to the Woman of Canaan : When she had striven with him a great while, and would take no denial, at last he saith, *O Woman, great*

is thy Faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt. Take what thou wilt, if thou wilt have Life for thy Child, and Peace for thine own Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, take it; for it is all thine. He, as it were, turns her loose to all his Treasury. If she had gone away at the first or second denial, she had found no Help: But because she held out, she had all her Hearts desire. God would have us wrestle with his Majesty, that he may be overcome in Mercy and Goodness. I might have here taken some of the most desperate Cases that could be, that you might have seen what Faith would have done in the midst of the want of all Means, and in the greatest Extremity that could have befallen a poor Sinner; but I pass over that at this time. Now therefore consider what hath been said; Lay these things up, and have them ever before you, and practise them: And by often writing, learn to write; and do often living, learn to live. Many People live poorly, and make a poor shift to go to Heaven: But I would not have a Christian live so, but be Master of his Art. Know and see your way, and use the means. Labour to get good thereby, that

that you may have sap, and the sweet of the Promises, and so go singing, and rejoicing, and triumphing up to Heaven. Now that which I conclude withal, is this: You see how far the Lord hath brought us, how the Soul hath been prepared, and cut off from Sin and himself, if fitted for the Lord Jesus by Contrition and Humiliation, and that the Soul comes to see that there is no hope in the Creatures, nor any succour in Heaven, but in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so at last the Sinner comes and lyes at the foot of the Lord Jesus Christ, and knows that either he must be another Man, or a damned Man. Now when he sees that Prayer and all other Means will not profit, and the Power of the Means yet prevails not, and the Power of his Corruptions is not yet mastered; then he looks up to Christ, and is contented that he should do what he will with him. Now when the Lord Jesus Christ sees him lye wearied thus with his Corruptions, then the Lord gives special notice to his Soul, that it is his purpose to do him good, and that there is Mercy for that broken Heart of his. With that, Hope is stirred, and Faith. Is it possible? Is it credible? Shall this wretchedness of mine

thine be pardoned? Oh my desire is Kindled within me, and I long for that day. Oh that I might once see the Funeral of all my Sins! Mark now, how Love and Joy are cheered to entertain this Mercy; and faith, Oh how is the Soul bound and engaged to God, that offers free and undeserved Grace to a stubborn and rebellious Sinner! At last the Will faith *Amen* to the Promise, and further faith, O that Mercy I will have! And thus the Soul is come home to God, by Vocation. Now the Prodigal is come home to his Father, and the Father's Heart leaps within his Breast, when he sees him lye at the Door. And as the Father rejoyceth, so the Angels in Heaven rejoyce, and all the Faithful shall rejoyce, and say, Oh my Husband, Oh my Father, Oh my Child, and my Wife that was a sinful Woman, is come home again to her first and best Husband. You that have found it thus in your selves, be comforted: You that know it in others, rejoyce.

To sum up all briefly, we see,
 First, When we have pluck'd away all carnal Props, that then there is way made for the Promise to come in to us.
 Secondly,

Secondly, And when our Hearts are possessed throughly of the Sufficiency of God's Promise and Grace, that then the Promise that draws near, begins its Work.

Thirdly, That when we expect all from the Promise, even Power to come to it, that then it lays fast hold upon us.

Fourthly, That when we are content to yield to the just Conditions of the Promise, then the Promise carries us, and all in us.

Thus we have seen the Hindrances removed, and the Means propounded: And now that we may be moved and perswaded importunately to seek after this blessed Grace of God, let us further consider thus much, namely, that if we once get this Grace, we get all other Graces with it, which is a ground of much Comfort, and cannot but keep us doing: For will it not much encourage a Man when in the doing of one Work he knows he shall do another, nay, all his Work with one labour? But so it is in the Work of Faith. Oh then how should it encourage us to labour for Faith, seeing that by getting it we have all! Men that are wile to provide for themselves, and to lay

Faith to
be labour-
ed for a-
bove all
Graces.

lay out their Moneys in some Purchase for the best ; when they see a Ground well wooded and watered, but especially to have some rich Mines in it, all their Minds will be upon such a place, because, having it, they have all with it : So it should be here, in our Desires : And as there, so here : Get Grace, and get all : Strengthen here, and all is strong : But want here, and want everywhere : Having this Grace of Faith, you need not seek for Wisdom, for Faith will make you wise to Salvation : And you need not labour for Patience, for he that is faithful, will be patient : And so for other Graces. He that hath the Grace of Faith, hath them all, hath Holiness, hath Cleanness, hath Love, hath a pure Mind, and good Conscience ; and what hath he not ? The Saints of God endeavour with much Pains to get Grace, and to subdue Corruption : But because they take not the right way to it, they seek and not find.

Many a poor Soul mourns and cries to Heaven for Mercy, and prays against a stubborn hard Heart, and is weary of his Life, because this vile Heart remains yet in him ; and yet haply gets little or no redress : The
reason

reason is, and the main Wound lyes
here; he goes the wrong way to
work; for, he that would have Grace
must (first of all) get Faith; Faith will
bring all the rest; buy the Field, and
the Pearl is thine; it goes with the
Purchase; thou must not think with
thine own struggling to get the mastery
of a proud Heart; for that will not
do; but let thy Faith go first to
Christ, and try what that can do.
There are many Graces necessary in
this Work; as Meekness, Patience, Hu-
mility and Wisdom: Now Faith will
fetch all these, and possess the Soul of
them. Brethren, therefore if you see
any price upon these Graces, buy the
Field, labour for Faith; get that, and
you get all. The Apostle saith, *We all
with open Face beholding, as in a Glass,
the Glory of the Lord, are changed into
the same Image from Glory to Glory.*
The Lord Christ is the Glass, and the
glorious Grace of God in Christ is
that Glory of the Lord. Therefore
first behold this Grace in Christ by
Faith (and thou must so, before thou
canst receive Grace). First see Hu-
mility in Christ, and then fetch it
thence. First see Strength and Cou-
rage in him, whereby to enable thy
weak Heart, and Strength will come
there

there fetch it, and there have it. Would you then have a meek, gracious and humble Heart? I dare say for some of you, that you had rather have it than any thing under Heaven, and would think it the best Bargain that ever you made? Which is the cause why you say, O that I could once see that day, that this proud Heart of mine might be humbled. Oh if I could see the last Blood of my Sins, I should then think my self happy, none more, and desire to live no longer! But is this thy desire poor Soul? Then get Faith, and so buy the whole, for they all go together: Nor think to have them upon any price, not having Faith; I mean Patience, and Meekness, and the humble Heart: But buy Faith the Field, and you have the Pearl. Further, would you have the Glory of God under Eye, and be more heavenly-minded? Then look to it, and get it by the Eye of Faith: Look up to it in the Face of Jesus Christ, and then you shall see it; and then hold you there: For there, and there only, this Vision of the Glory of God is to be seen, to your everlasting Peace and endless Comfort. When Men use to make a Purchase, they speak of all the Commodities

ties of it ; as, That there is so much
Wood worth so much ; and so much
stock worth so much, and then they
offer for the whole answerable to
these severals. So here there is *Item*
for an heavenly Mind, and that's
worth Thousands; and *Item* for an
humble Heart, and that's worth Mil-
lions ; and so for the rest. And are
those Graces so much worth ? What
is Faith worth then ? Hence we
may conclude, and say, Oh precious
Faith ! Precious indeed, that is able
to bring so many, nay, all Graces
with it : As one degree of Grace
after another : And Grace here, and
Happiness for ever hereafter. If we
have but the Hearts of Men (I do
not say of Christians) methinks this
that is spoken of Faith, should pro-
voke us to labour always, above all
things, for this blessed Grace of God,
the Grace of Faith.

F I N I S.

William

Marshall

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